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Thesis

THE "SEDULOUS APE" AND CHAUCER
A STUDY OF CHAUCER'S THEORY AND PRACTICE OF RHETORIC

by

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(A.B., Boston University, 1930)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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The "Sedulous Ape" and Chaucer

A Study of Chaucer's Theory and Practice of Rhetoric.

Ia Ia There is no method more valuable to the student who desires to master an art than the continual appeal for guidance and instruction to the works of those who have mastered the art before him. So in learning to master the art of writing the student feels the necessity of choosing from the great masters of literature some few whose works may serve to set him a standard by which he may measure the merits of his own efforts. As he considers the great names of literature, to which he may hope to add his own, he finds himself bewildered at the magnitude of that list, and, with his own ambition in mind, is forced to ask himself two questions. "Just what in the works of each of these men has entitled him to greatness? And what is there to be gained from the careful study of an author that will help me in my own writing?"

The first question will call up dozens of answers, among which two stand out as of prime importance. Each of these authors has had something vital to say, and each has said it clearly, forcibly, and in a manner which satisfies his readers.

1. As for the second question, what does each author have to offer a student that can help him in his work? The one thing which an author cannot give to another, is the initial endowment of having something worth saying. For this the student must look within himself. The acuteness of observation, the power to understand and to recreate, and the urge to communicate his thoughts to others cannot be borrowed. But an author can help a student to acquire the other element of greatness, the power of communication. Literature contains a wealth of good advice, which successful authors have generously incorporated in their writings, but better still it offers a treasury of good example. The plan that will help more than anything else perhaps in studying the art of writing is the careful examination of the practices of those whose works we admire. Stevenson has made this theory famous, suggesting to all young writers that they deliberately aim at reproducing the qualities of another's style as a preliminary to perfecting their own. On this subject Prof. J. Middleton Murry has said, in his Essays on Style,

"I know of no other sense in which we can speak of style being learned, and my recommendation is perhaps only another version of Stevenson's 'sedulous ape.' Odd and ambitious as it may sound - and in this respect I have the temerity to feel that I am right, and Stevenson wrong - the only writer to whom we may safely play the 'sedulous ape' is the greatest of them all. He must be a Colossus, for our business is 'to walk under his

huge legs and peep about'; if he is less than a Colossus, we may be, we inevitably shall be tempted to imitate the superficial idiosyncracy of his style."[1]

b. 2. a. With these words in mind I have been tempted to examine the methods of an author whose position has remained unshaken through the challenge of five centuries. Chaucer is not "the greatest of them all", but I think Mr. Murry would agree that he is a Colossus, whose head towers so high among the giants of literature that we on the ground will never be able to make a comparison by inches. Moreover, the idiosyncracies of Chaucer, like those of Shakespeare, belong in the main to the conventions of an age, and these we are in no danger of imitating, while his strength, like that of Shakespeare and of all other masters, is founded on the fundamental precepts of literature which we accept as readily today as in the 14th century.

b. This leads us to another reason for choosing Chaucer as a master. Besides the fact that he is a Colossus, there is a spirit in his work that seems to belong especially to the present century. Students who read the Canterbury Tales for the first time invariably exclaim, "Why, Chaucer is so modern! This might have been written today!" Chaucer is modern, though he is also essentially medieval, for in many respects the 14th century is very much like our own. The modernity of Chaucer has two sources. In the first place his interest lay not in the superficial fashions and customs of his age but in humanity itself which never changes. A nd in the second place there is something in the mild satire,

1 - Murry; The Problem of Style. - page 116.

the tolerant humor, and the swift straightforward simplicity of his narrative that meets a quick response in the modern mind, and that is akin to the expression of our own age.

Therefore, because Chaucer's greatness may be accepted by us without qualification, and because his poetry meets with particular sympathy today, he should have much to teach us who aspire either to appreciate or to imitate good writing. His genius- the deep and infinite observation, the keen perception, the powerful interpretation of his mind- can only serve as inspiration. But his art, the technique which he employed, may lend itself to study and may serve as guide.

For Chaucer, contrary to some opinions even today, was a conscious artist. A careful study of the development from his early conventionality to his later power, will convince the student that such progress could only be the result of painstaking and intelligent effort. That Chaucer had formed very definite theories concerning his work may be clearly seen from passages scattered freely in his poems. That he knew the conventions of his time is shown not only by his correct use of them and by his skillful modification of them to suit his needs, but by the many specific references to them that occur frequently in his work.

These conventions could not very well have escaped his attention. The Middle Ages was a time when literary requirements were rigorous, when rules and patterns existed for the minutest form of written work. Centuries of rhetorical theory, beginning with Aristotle, and continued by Latin writers such as Cicero

and Quintillian, had produced a set of rules so intricate and binding that no author could ignore them and hope to gain a public. Moreover, as Professor Manly has pointed out,[1] Chaucer was an educated man, familiar with writing on astronomy, alchemy, medicine, and philosophy, and in his thorough study he must have included the prominent works in his own field of rhetoric.

We know that Chaucer was acquainted with one volume, the leading authority on rhetoric of his day, by a specific reference to Gaufred de Vinsauf, its author:

> O Gaufred, dere mayster soverayn,
> That, whan thy worthy king Richard was slayn
> With shot, compleynedest his deth so sore,
> Why ne hadde I now thy sentence and thy lore,
> The Friday for to chyde, as diden ye? [2]

Other references to such teachings, for example:

> Telle us som mery thing of aventures;
> Your termes, your colours, and your figures,
> Kepe hem in stoor til so be ye endyte
> Heigh style, as whan taht men to kinges wryte.
> Speketh so pleyn at this tyme, I yow preye,
> That we may understonde what ye seye. [3]

add to our certainty. The many references to medieval treatises are interesting not only because they show Chaucer's knowledge of such teachings, but because the lightly satirical touch shows his realization of their inadequacy. It was Chaucer's ability to assimilate these teachings, to use them when he desired, yet to

1. Manly: Chaucer and the Rhetoricains- page 6
2. B. lines 4537-4541
3. E. lines 14-20

see them in their proper value that placed him so far ahead of his contemporaries. Prof. Manley has shown us very clearly how Chaucer, subscribing at first almost wholly to their regulations, came to rely less and less upon them, and to replace them with his own methods.

D. It is these original methods that are worthy of our study and will perhaps point the way to successful writing. Medieval rhetoric we cannot ignore, and constant reference to it will be necessary. But the medieval theories do not fully explain the completeness and directness with which Chaucer developed his plots, for his originality and genius led him far beyond the structural patterns of his day. Therefore, since these patterns are of no use to us today we may derive greater benefit by applying our modern theories of rhetoric to Chaucer's work, in an attempt to see how nearly he measures up to our accepted standards. We must not forget that Chaucer was unaware of the majority of these rules, and that in reality he must be judged by the standards of his own time rather than by ours. But since the vocabulary of medieval rhetoric is meaningless to us, it is only by reducing his art to the terms with which we are familiar that we can derive from it any practical value.

E Before we pass to our discussion of modern methods, however, some mention should be made of the medieval authorities whose precepts will be constantly quoted in comparison. The chief sources of rhetoric in The Middle Ages were the Latin works, De Inventione and De Rhetorica ad Herennium of Cicero, and the Epistle of Horace to Piso. From these two sources medieval

teachers had composed many treatises, chief among them the Ars Versificatoria of Matthieu de Vendome, the Documentum de Arte Versificandi , and the Nova Poetria, both by Gaufred de Vinsauf. The last named enjoyed an enormous popularity unexplainable today. As a literary work it cannot claim any merit; as an exercise book it is valuable in revealing the rules of the day. In this work, composition is not treated as a matter of creative imagination, but of "fine writing".[1] No attention is given to conveying the conception or to emotional or aesthetic effect. The treatise is merely an elaborate system of technical devices as to form and structure. Since originality is not considered, the whole problem becomes one of retelling an old tale so as to make it more beautiful. The book is largely devoted to the question of colores, or figures of speech, devices for amplification, and to the various forms of digression. Many of these colores and devices will later be named as the need arises. 2.

The General Principles of Rhetoric

Unity

In taking up the general principles of modern rhetoric we come first to the discussion of unity, since the conformity to a design or pattern of some sort must accompany any piece of writing from the start.

Even at the selection of the subject the thought of the plan must guide the writer. He cannot start out to write without knowing what he is to write about, or where his writing is to end. Usually the reader too desires some statement by way of explanation

1. Manly: Chaucer and the Rhetoricians- page 10
2. For list see appendix

Chaucer usually explains very clearly what his story is to be about, and in almost every case provides at the start a clear statement of his theme. For example, in the Prologue of the Canterbury Tales he precedes his famous descriptions by the statement:

> But natheles, whyl I have tyme and space,
> Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
> Me thinketh it accordaunt to resoun,
> To telle yow al the condicioun
> Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
> And whiche they weren, and of what degree;
> And eek in what array that they were inne:
> And at a knight than wol I first biginne. 1.

Also the Astrolabe, a treatise on astronomy written for his small son, begins with an explanation;

> Litel Lowis my sone, I have perceived wel by certeyne evidences thyn abilite to lerne sciences noumbres and proporcions; and as wel considere I thy bisy preyere in special to lerne the Tretis of the Astrolabie. Than, for as mechel as a philosofre seith, 'he wrappeth him in his frend, that condescendeth to the rightful preyers of his frend', ther-for have I geven thee a suffisaunt Astrolabie as for oure orizonte, compowned after the latitude of Oxenford; upon which, by mediacion of this litle tretis, I purpose to teche thee a certein nombre of conclusions apertening to the same instrument. 2.

At the present time, a statement at the beginning of a story is avoided as obvious, or because it may spoil the suspense or the surprise ending, but in Chaucer's time when the plots were simple and purposeful, and often already familiar to the audience, a statement served economically to give the reader at once a grasp of the theme of the tale to come. This method is particularly effective in moral tales. Chaucer employed this device in the first lines of Troilus and Criseyde when he said:

1. A. lines 35- 42
2. Astrolabe lines 1-14

> That double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
> That was the king Priamus sone of Troye,
> In lovinge, how his aventures fellen
> Fro wo to wele, and after out of joye,
> My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye.
> Thesiphone, thou help me for t'endyte
> Thise woful vers, that wepen as I wryte! 1

In the Prologue to Legend of Good Women he announces definitely his intention, carefully defined by the queen -

> But he shal maken, as ye wil devyse,
> Of wommen trewe in lovinge al hir lyve, 2

In the Canterbury Tales these statements often occur in the Prologues, as when the Miller says -

> For I wol telle a legende and a lyf
> Bothe of a Carpenter, and of his wyf,
> How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe. 3

While not all the pilgrims define their subjects as rigidly as does the Miller, in nearly every case we have a general idea of what is to come, often this knowledge arises from the appreciation of the narrator himself. We know, for instance, that the Friar will ridicule the Somnour and that the Somnour will retaliate with a ribald story about a Friar. Occasionally the source and type of the tale are described, as when the Franklin announces that he will tell an old Briton Lay.

8. In choosing his subject the author has also to bear in mind the circumstances. He has first to consider the reader of his work. Chaucer takes this fact especially into consideration in the writing of the Astrolabe, when he says -

"that sothly, in any tretis of the Astrolabie that I have seyn there ben some conclusions that wole nat in alle - things performen hir bihestes; and some of hem ben to harde to thy tendre age of ten yeer to conseyve." 4

1 - Troilus and Criseyde - Book I - line 1-7
2 - Prologue - 437.
3 - A line 3141-3143
4 - Astrolabe line line 23-28

The Legend of Good Women is tempered to please the queen, and the Pardoner's Tale to move the "lewed " people. These are adjustments of an obvious sort; a much more subtle adaptation is required in the Canterbury Tales since in them both the story-teller and audience had to be considered. Keenly aware of the individuality of his pilgrims,Chaucer makes this adjustment with astonishing skill. The Parson refuses to tell fables; the Canon Yeoman sticks to the field he knows best, and the Prioress, who would not know worldly tales, recounts a delicate legend peculiarly suited to her character. Chaucer also kept in mind the intended effects of his poems. So the Parlement of Foules, an elegy on the death of Blanche, wife of John of Gaunt, is subtly keyed to the occasion. The Miller)s Tale is intended to annoy the Reeve, Sir Thopas to ridicule the popular romance.

In the development of a subject the use of examples and details becomes a necessity-though the medieval writers employed the device rather as a luxury. Chaucer recalls to mind many instances of the fickleness of man as he meditates of Aeneas' desertion of Dido.[1] Dorigene, in the Franklin's Tale, tries to convince herself that death is better than shame by citing well-known examples of maidens faithful to their vows.[2] Yet on the whole Chaucer uses examples with moderation and even causes th Doctor to remind himself:

> Suffyseth oon ensample now as here
> For I mot turne agayne to my matere. [3]

1. House of Fame lines 388-426
2. F. lines 1367-1459
3. Canterbury Tales lines 103-104 c.

The same discretion is shown (in his best works) in the use of detail. The Knight's Tale abounds in details, but at his best Chaucer had no fondness for them, and though he could note significant items, as is shown in his descriptions of the Canterbury Pilgrems, he never revels in unessential details as did his contemporaries. In fact we often find apologies for omission of this sort as in Troilus and Criseyde, when he regrets not giving every word of the lovers.

Another method of development is by association.[1] Chaucer employs this mehtod when he puts in the mouth of January a long speech comparing single and married life, and when the Host compares his wife first with Prudence and later with Griselda. In shorter form he effectively uses comparison to describe the Monk:

> For there he was nat lyk a cloisterer,
> With a thredbar cope, as is a povre scoler,
> But he was lyk a maister or a pope. [2]

As a subject unfolds, the problem of limiting it soon becomes evident. For in following a plan any details must be excluded which do not essentially further this plan. Such details if introduced, form a digression. It is on this question of digression that we clash most violently with the medieval rhetoricians, since their whole aim was toward the wordiness which we condemn. Chaucer seems especially at fault in this particular, for we find him unable to resist including bits of information which interest him, regardless of their pertinence or value. For example, in the Book of the Duchess we have the

1. i.e. comparison
2. A. lines 259-261

the story of Ceyx and Alcyone from Ovid, in the Parliament of Foules, the Dream of Scipio, and in the House of Fame we follow the intricate wanderings of faithless Aeneas. Kittredge attempts to prove that what seem digressions to us are not necessarily such, but arise from a medieval habit of inserting whole stories instead of the allusions our modern authors are privileged to make to more widely educated readers.[1] However, in Chaucer's later tales we find less evidence of this tendency; where it occurs in the Canterbury Tales it must be attributed rather to the narrator or to the type of tale he is telling than to Chaucer himself. The Man of Law, for instance, continually interrupts his story with remarks and invocations, Biblical allusions and long soliloquies - and we would expect him to. The Knight's Tale too has a wealth of detail out of proportion to its action, but it is a marvelous condensation of a type which ordinarily abounds in digressions. That Chaucer realized the need for excluding nonessentials in the writing of good narrative we may see from his many remarks of which two are representative.

Knight; "This is the'effect, ther is namore to seye,"[2]

A nd at greater length -

> And shortly tolde him al the occasioun
> Why Dido com into that regioun,
> Of which as now me lusteth nat to ryme;
> Hit nedeth nat; hit nere but los of tyme.[3]

4. Of the devices for securing unity the most important is the use of topic statements. For example, Chaucer opens his House of

1 - Kittredge; Chaucer and His Poetry - page 23-24
2 - A - 2366
3 - Legend of Good Women - line 994-997

Fame by saying "God turne us every dreem to Gode!", which is the lead for a long discussion of the meaning of dreams. Here and there among his Tales we find topic statements scattered, unobtrusively, yet definitely, marking the progression of thought and action, as shown in Troilus and Criseyde.

> "Encresen gan the wo fro day to night
> Of Troilus, for taryinge of Criseyde,"

which introduces a pathetic paragraph in which this statement is developed by particulars of his misery -

> "For which al doun he in his bed him layde;
> He ne eet, ne dronk, ne sleep, ne word he seyde." [1]

Speaking of Unity in general, Lounsbury says "He seizes upon the central points of interest and lets everything go by that does not contribute to the effectiveness of their representation." [2] As Chaucer began to tire of the old forms of allegory and romance and to develop an interest in the unfolding of character and situation, he became more keenly aware of the necessity of excluding such material as did not immediately further his purpose. Perhaps his own words, written at an early stage in this new development, may present his theory of unity as clearly as could any further discussion.

> The wedding and the feste to devyse,
> To me, that have y-take swiche empryse
> Of so many a storie for to make,
> Hit were to long, lest that I sholde slake
> Of thing that bereth more effect and charge;
> For men may overlade a ship or barge;
> A nd forthy to the'effect than wol I skippe,
> A nd al the remenant, I wol lete hit slippe. [3]

1 - Troilus and Criseyde - line 1436-1440 Bk. V
2 - II - page 328
3 - Legend of Good Women - line 616-623

k. Coherence

1a. In the following of a plan for the purpose of securing Unity it is necessary to give attention to Coherence, or to the logical arrangement of the various parts of the plan. To this principle we would expect to find Chaucer giving meticulous care, for the rhetoric of his day was insistent on the logical arrangement of literature. Kittredge says of this age - "never, I suppose, was the principle of law and order in literature more dominant than in the Middle Ages. Schematism held undisputed sway in the schools. Rules were accepted as if they came from heaven."[1] Of Chaucer's works the most extreme demonstration of this formality of arrangement is in the Tale of Melibeus, in which the outline, an endless division of titles and sub-titles, is clearly indicated. Since even a little study of this sort leaves its traces in every subsequent piece of writing, we find the same ability and patience that such an exercise demanded turned to more welcome ends in his other tales.

1. Time, for instance, is almost always clearly indicated in Chaucer's works. Since his tales invariably follow the simplest order, beginning at the beginning, giving explanation immediately and continuing chronologically to the end, the problem remained of marking the stages of advancement in the narrative. For this purpose he introduces statements, as in the Knight's Tale;

> What sholde I al-day of his wo endyte,
> Whan he endured hadde a year or two
> This cruel torment, and this peyne and wo, 2

1 - Kittredge; Chaucer and his poetry , page 11
2 - A - line 1381-1383

and

> In derknesse and horrible and strong prisoun
> This seven yeer hath seten Palamoun, 1

and in Troilus and Criseyde -

> Whan every wight was voided but they two,
> And alle the dores were faste y-shette, 2

These statements are continually supplemented by such words as whan, atte laste, tho, etc. so that the reader is seldom confused as to the passage of time.

In his explanation also Chaucer is aware of the necessity of following chronological order. The names of great authors whose statues stand in the House of Fame,[3] are not given chronologically, but in the order of the events which they celebrated - first the chroniclers of the founding of Troy, then of the founding of Rome, and last of Caesar and Pompey. Dorigene, in her long list of examples of faithful maidens remembers to consider Greece first, then Carthage, and Rome. That this arrangement was not careless or accidental we may be sure after reading the apology of the Monk for his own lack of order:

> But first I yow biseke in this matere,
> Though I by ordre telle nat thise thinges,
> Be it of popes, emperours, or kinges,
> After hir ages, as men writen finde,
> But telle hem som bifore and some bihinde,
> As it now comth un-to my remembraunce;
> H ave me excused of myn ignoraunce. 4

2. Chaucer is careful not only to indicate time but to suggest his setting. In his description of his approach to the House of Fame

1 - A - line 1451-1452
2 - Book III - line 232-234
3 - House of Fame - line 1430-1513
4 - B - line 3174-3180

we find a careful attention to place. We have a definite sense of motion here, cleverly indicated as the objects become clearer, and general impression gives way to appreciation of detail. In fact so clear an impression of location have we as Chaucer stands inside the hall that we find it difficult to follow the messenger as he descends to the dark cave of Eolus.

That Chaucer was aware of the necessity of following the order of process we may infer from the words of the Canon Yeoman who, like the Monk, apologizes for his incoherent massing of detail, which he explains by saying,

> Ther is also ful many another thing
> That is unto our craft apertening;
> Though I by ordre hem nat reherce can,
> By-cause that I am a lewed man,
> Yet wol I telle hem as they come to minde,
> Though I ne can nat sette hem in hir kinde; 1.

But a few pages later we find him taking great pains to give the details of each process in order, from the building of the fire to the discovery of the silver.

In attention to the causal connection of ideas the rhetoric of Chaucer's time was particularly rigid. A statement, supported by not one but many reasons, and by examples and authorities, was the basis of a medieval sermon. The Tale of Melibeus and the Parson's Tale furnish countless examples, and the Prologue of the Wyf of Bath's Tale, in a lighter vein, follows a similar order.

Besides the structural coherence secured by arrangement, we are accustomed to look for a logical arrangement of idea, or a "psychological" arrangement. In order to abtain a clear understanding of a new idea, we require to be led from a review of

1. G. lines 784-789

what we already know of that idea or of similar ideas to a consideration of what we do not know. Chaucer follows this order in his famous exposition of the House of Fame, when, after reminding us first of the law of gravity (if I may use the term), then of smoke rising and of rivers flowing to the sea, all of which phenomena we are familiar with, he leads us to the new proposition of sound moving likewise to its inevitable destination.

Just as a certain order is necessary for the clearness of an idea, so arrangement may add or detract from the interest with which we follow a piece of writing. The order of climax becomes especially important in narrative. From his earliest work Chaucer shows a keen appreciation of the effectiveness of this order, for he employs it to emphasize the sorrow of the knight in the Book of the Duchess. In his later work this appreciation results in such matchless treatment of climax as that of the Pardoner's Tale .

In description also the climactic order is extremely effective. Strange to say, the descriptions in the Prologue of the Canterbury Tales show surprising lack of climactic order, perhaps because, as Kittredge has suggested, Chaucer considered these sketches in the light of a dramatis personae rather than as solitary portraits, The descriptions of the Doctor, the Wife of Bath, the Parson, and the Manciple, do show climax to some extent, but in most cases the sketches end with a decided drpp or peter out in unarresting detail. 1.

Akin to the climactic order is the order which results in surprise by apparent change of plan. Chuacer employs this skill-

1. For use of climax in description see page 51.

fully in the parody, Sir Thopas, when he says,

> Ther-inne is many a wilde best,
> Ye, bothe bukke and hare. 1.

In the same way the Clerk's Tale, which seems to be proving one thing is at the last minute suddenly and ingeniously twisted to prove another thing entirely. This surprise in meaning is the nearest approach Chaucer ever made to the so-called "surprise ending" which modern authors have used so successfully. Any possibility of surprise which might have resulted from the climactic order in the tales of the Pardoner and of the Wife of Bath is excluded by the fore-knowledge of the type of tales each represents; the Pardoner is preaching a sermon; the Wife is illustrating a point already made.

2. Of the devices for securing Coherence we will consider only three, conjunctive words, repetition, and sentence arrangement.

a. Words expressing relation we hardly need to illustrate. A page of Chaucer's poetry will reveal a number of tho's, but's, now's eek's and other such words to show his careful attention to this necessity. A peculiarity of his work is his use of pronouns at the beginnings of stanzas, which throw the attention back to the preceding stanza. For example:

> For he a povre womman wedded hadde,
> Hath mordred bothe his children prively.
> Swich murmur was among hem communly.
> No wonder is, for to the peples ere
> Ther cam no word but that they mordred were.
>
> For which, wher-as his peple ther-biiore
> Had loved him wel, the sclaundre of his diffame
> Made hem that they him hatede therfore; 2.

1. B. lines 1945-1946
2. E. " " 723-731

a. The repetition of words often aids in securing clearness of thought. In the long discourse of Troilus of free will and the foreknowledge of God, note the constant recurrence of the word "necessitee".[1] More commom perhaps is the repetition involved in the transition from one thought to another. Countless examples of transitional statements may be found in Chaucer. Often they mark an abrupt change in narrative, as when the narrator goes back to pick up a thread of another character in his tale.

> Now wol I stinte of this Averagus
> And speken I wole of Dorigene his wyf," 2.

Occasionally they serve both as summary and announcement in a way that is well worth studying, as in this case:

> Nat only that this worlde hadde him in awe
> For lesinge of richnesse or libertee,
> But he made every man reneye his lawe. 3.

More often these statements merely point out a change to come, as when the Knight says,

> Now comth the poynt, and herkneth if you leste." 4.

Or when Chaucer exclaims;

> Now to th'effect, now to the point of al,
> Why I have told this story, and tellen shal.
> Thus I beginne..... 5.

Statements of this sort are infinite. Chaucer never leaves us in doubt as to what he is speaking of or where he is in his story.

c. A study of sentence structure would lead us too far afield, and a few statements must be sufficient. In the main, Chaucer's sentences are simple, and loose in structure. One example of effective balance may be of interest.

> For out of olde feldes, as men seith,
> Cometh al this newe corn fro yeer to yere;
> And out of olde bokes, in good feith,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere. 6.

1. T.&C.Bk.IV 1.965-1080
2. F. 1. 814-815
3. B.1.3749-3751
4. A. 2207
5. L. of G.W. 1.1160-1163
6. P of F. 1.22-25

It should be noted in leaving this discussion of Coherence that the simplicity of Chaucer's plots made arrangement and indicative remarks of the plainest kind sufficient for clear narrative. He never conceived the intricate interaction of plot that make for the bewildering shifts of scene in Dicken's novels. Perhaps it is this singleness of purpose and simplicity of design that brings Chaucer so close to our contemporary story-tellers.

C. Emphasis

The third general principle of rhetoric is Emphasis, which may be secured in four ways; by arrangement, by interruption, by repetition, and by intensification.

1. a. As for arrangement, the climatic order has been already discussed, and will be treated more fully later. But a word might be said for climatic order in sentence structure. Notice the sheer power of the two lines of the Prioress's Tale:

> This povre widwe awaiteth al that night
> After her litel child, but he cam noght; 1.

A re-phrasing of these lines would be unthinkable. In two lines of the simplest language we have a crescendo of feeling difficult to surpass. On the other hand we have the opposite of climax, anti-climax strikingly used in Sir Thopas:

> For in that contree was ther noon
> That to him dorste ryde or goon,
> Neither wyf ne childe. 2.

In ordinary sentence structure variety makes for emphasis, and an occasional periodic sentence among many of loose structure lays stress upon the idea it contains. It is difficult to find striking examples of periodic formation in Chaucer's poems, though

1. B. lines 1776-1777
2. B. lines 1994-1996

the Clerk's stanzas and sentences are almost all so planned. One case may prove that when Chaucer took care to vary his sentences he did it thoroughly.

> Ther nas cousere wel y-brydled noon,
> Ne stede, for the justing wel to goon,
> Ne large palfrey, esy for the nones,
> Ne juwel, fretted ful of riche stones,
> Ne sakkes ful of gold, of large wighte,
> Ne ruby noon, that shynede by nighte,
> Ne gentil hautein faucon heronere,
> Ne hound, for hert or wilde boor or dere,
> Ne coupe of gold, with florins newe y-bete,
> That in the lond of Libie may be gete,
> That Dido ne hath hit Eneas y-sent; 1.

2. Interruption, the second method, includes several devices. The simplest is an abruptness, or cutting short of narration. The ending of the Pardoner's Tale is a masterly bit of abruptness, as is a bit of a far earlier work, the Book of the Duchess, quoted on page 83.

a. Antithesis may also be termed an interruption, and Chaucer often makes use of this device, both in sentence structure and in narration. Often he repeats the much discussed complaint:

> For both I hadde thing which that I nolde,
> And eek I ne hadde that thing that I wolde. 2.

Likewise to emphasize the woe of Troilus he places him among the gay festivities of a feast. 3.

b. The form of interruption most dear to the hearts of the ancient rhetoricians was apostrophe, or the breaking of the narrative with exclamations, questions addressed to the characters, or to the reader, or feigned hesitation as to what to say. The Man of Law pauses in his account of Custence's departure to ask:

> Allas! what wonder is it though she wepte,
> That shal be sent to strange nacioun
> Fro freendes, that so tendrely hir kepte,
> And to be bounden under subieccioun
> Of oon, she knoweth not his condicioun. 3.

1. L. of G.W. lines 1114-1115
2. P of F. " 89-91
3. T. and C. " 436-455 4. B. lines 267- 271

And the Monk in his Tragedies often inserts such remarks as:

> O noble almighty Sampson, leef and dere,
> Had thou nat told to wommen thy secree,
> In al this worlde ne hadde been thy pere! 1.

Interruptions of this sort are occasionally effective, and, even when not particularly useful, are often to be forgiven because they reveal the personality of the narrator. But when , as in the tale of the Manciple, they exceed the length of the narrative itself, then the tale falls flat through over-emphasis.

3. a. The third method of emphasis, repetition, is perhaps the most obvious method and must be handled sparingly. Repetition of word can easily become tiresome. Chaucer uses repetition forcefully to drive home his point at the close of Troilus and Criseyde:

> Swich fyn hath, lo,this Troilus for love,
> Swich fyn hath al his grete worthinesse;
> Swich fyn hath his estat real above,
> Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse;
> Swich fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse. 2.

b. The re-phrasing of an idea seems a practical method of directing attention, but it is difficult to find a good example in Chaucer. Except for such expressions as "in joy and in gladnesse", there is little repetition of thought. It would seem that after an idea once found satisfactory expression , the driving force of the narrative did not allow him to linger.

4. The title of the fourth method, intensification, covers a number of devices, the first of which might be the reduction of an abstract idea to concrete terms. In this way Chaucer emphasizes the desolation of Criseyde's empty house by adding the details which wounded Troilus afresh:

1. B. lines 3242-3245
2. T.&C. Bk. V. lines 1828-1832

For whan he saugh hir dores sperred alle,
Wel neigh for sorwe a-doun he gan to falle.

Therwith whan he was war and gan biholde
How shet was every windowe of the place,
As frost, him thoughte, his herte gan to colde; 1.

It is this selection of concrete and significant detail that creates so vivid an impression of personality in the pictures of the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales. The gold love knot of the Monk, and the table manners of the Prioress accomplish what stanzas of abstract description might have failed to do.

V. Chaucer's use of another device for intensification, hyperbole, sharply illustrates the development of his skill. When he tells us in Anelida and Arcite that

For as of trouthe, is ther noon hir liche,
Of all the women in his worlde riche."" 2.

we accept the statement as part of a conventional description. But when he says in the Canterbury Tales

A Frere ther was, a wantown and a merye,
A limitour, a ful solempne man.
In alle the ordres foure is noon that can
So muche of daliaunce and fair langage. 3.

or

In al this world ne was ther noon him lyk,
To speke of phisik and of surgerye; 4.

we are won into a belief that this is true. It is the same convention, to be sure, but now it is applied to actual and individual people with a positiveness that is convincing.

Chaucer also uses the opposite of hyperbole, litotes, with excellent results, as in the case of the Clerk:

And he nas nat right fat, I undertake. 5.

1. T.&C.Bk.V. lines 531-535
2. Anelida and Arcite, lines 76-77
3. A. lines 208-211
4. A. lines 411-412
5. A. line 288

c. Irony, a well tried device for emphasis by intensification, has proved to be most effective in literature when driven by the force of a great emotion. This great emotion Chaucer lacked, and the bitterness with which his contemporaries attacked certain weaknesses is missing in his writing. The tone of mild and humorous satire that nevertheless pervades all his work cannot be overlooked. In many short passages he deals light but telling blows at the beliefs of his time. In certain definite cases, like that of the romance of Sir Thopas or of the Envoy of the Clerk's Tale, Chaucer proves himself a master at the art of delicate satire.

5a We cannot call our discussion of Emphasis complete if it does not include mention of two devices which belong particularly to Chaucer but which would not find a place in any modern textbook of rhetoric. One is employed after a conventional description of the detailed enumeration type recommended by Gaufred. In each case a brief summary is added to impress the reader. After a fairly long description of Anelida's beauty Chaucer states:

> And shortly, if she shal be comprehended,
> In hir ne mighte nothing been amended. 1.

Likewise, after devoting forty lines to a conventional naming of the various birds in the Parlement of Foules , he remarks:

> What shulde I syn? of foules every kinde
> That in this worlde han fethres and stature,
> Men mighten in that place assembled finde. 2.

v. The other device peculiar to Chaucer is the trick, amusing to new readers, of telling what he expressly states he is not going to tell, a device called in medieval rhetoric, occupatio.

1. Anelida and Arcite, lines 83-84
2. P.of F. lines 365-367

Here, for example,

> And many a mayde, of which the name I wante;
>
> Semyramus, Candace, and Ercules,
> Biblis, Dido, Tisbe, and Piramus etc. 1.

and quite characteristically here:

> The minstralcye, the service at the feste,
> The grete yiftes to the moste and leste,
> The riche array of Theseus paleys
> Ne who sat first ne last up-on the deys,
> What ladies fairest been or best daunsinge,
> Or which of hem can dauncen best and singe,
> Ne who most felingly speketh of love;
> What haukes sitten of the perche above,
> What houndes liggen of the floor adoun:
> Of al this make I now no mencioun; 2.

6. The devices pointed out in the preceding paragraphs may help to explain why we come away from a reading of Chaucer's poetry with a distinct memory of certain passages, and why a few clear pictures and potent remarks never quite desert us. The trick of throwing stress upon some parts of a narrative depends a good deal upon the author's discretion and ingenuity combined. As we have seen, conventional treatment may blur rather than accentuate a picture, while a well-chosen word, a subtle shift in sentence structure, or a touch of satire or emotion, may instantly so clarify and enliven a thought as to make it unforgettable.

1. P.of F. lines 2387-2892
2. A. lines 2197-2206

III. The Forms of Discourse

As we approach the forms of discourse we perceive immediately that in the case of Chaucer narration is predominant, and that in the main the other three forms, exposition, argumentation, and description, are subordinate and are almost always employed to further the narrative purpose. For this reason we will consider narration last in our discussion in order that the methods of its three aids may be clearly understood and that references to them may be clear.

a. Exposition

1. That the medieval and modern rules of Exposition do not differ very greatly may be seen from the following lines which are found in the second book of Metalogicus, a treatise of John of Salisbury, produced in 1159.

"The exposition of every book should be such as to furnish most readily the knowledge of what is written. No occasion should be sought of introducing difficulty; everywhere the way should be opened. " 1.

The tremendous popularity of "dictamen", or the art of letter-writing, gave rise to many volumes of rules, mainly adaptations of the classic rules of oratory to this form of written persuasion. In reviewing the regulations of the notarii, Professor Baldwin says," Their first and abiding concern was precision. Legal correctives of language, exactitude, systematic verification and record.....all demanded an elaborate technical skill. "[2] In the statements of facts of which these letters were mainly composed conciseness and clarity were demanded. Thus the aim of exposition was the same as our own, a clear statement of facts logically arranged. In the achievement of this end the

1. Baldwin: Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic page 167
2. "" " " " " " " 213

ancient rhetoricians differed slightly, for extreme formality of tone and multiplicity of detail and example were advised, and an elegance was deliberately sought after which we shun in our modern works as inappropriate.

2. The exposition found in Chaucer may be roughly divided into two classes; first the brief incidental explanations that occur at points in his narrative, and second the detailed explanations composing entire sections of the work.

a. The first class cannot be considered as serious exposition. It comprises the pertinent bits of information which sometimes aid, but more often clog the narrative movement. In the Book of the Duchess Chaucer, describing the sorrow of the Knight, says,

> The blood was fled, for pure drede,
> Doun to his herte, to make him warm-
> For wel hit feled the herte had harm-
> To wite eek why hit was a-drad
> By kinde, and for to make hit glad;
> For hit is membre principal
> Of the body; 1.

In the Parlement of Foules, in the long description of the birds gathered together for council, we come across bits of physiology both true and false, thrown in carelessly, as in these cases:

> The oule eek, that of dethe the bode bringeth 2.
> .....
> The cok, that orlege is of thorpes lyte 3.
> .....
> The swalow, modrer of the flyes smale
> That maken hony of floures fresshe of hewe; 4.

So we might class the line in the Prologue of the Canterbury Tales :

> And smale fowles maken melodye,
> That slepen al the night with open ye. 5.

A longer example occurs in the Introduction to the Man of Law's Prologue, when the host decides that "the fourthe party of this

1. B.ofD. lines 490-496
2. P.ofF. lines 343
3. " " " 350
4. " " " 353-354
5. A. lines 9-10

day is goon,"

> Our Hoste sey wel that the brighte sonne
> Th'ark of his artificial day had ronne
> The fourthe part, and half an houre, and more;
> And though he were not depe expert in lore,
> He wiste it was the eightetethe day
> Of April, that is messager to May;
> And sey wel that the shadwe of every tree
> Was as in lengthe the same quantitee
> That was the body erect that caused it.
> And therfor by the shadwe he took his wit
> That Phebus, which that shoon so clere and brighte,
> Degrees was fyve and fourty clombe on hightе;
> And for that day, as in that latitude,
> It was ten of the clokke, he gan conclude, 1.

Another example also illustrates clearly the use of the rhetorical figure distrbutio, or itemizing, as Saturn instructs Venus as to his various powers:

> "My dere doghter Venus," quod Saturne,
> My cours, that hath so wyde for to turne,
> Hath more power than wot any man.
> Myn is the drenching in the see so wan;
> Myn is the prison in the derke cote;
> Myn is the strangling and hanging by the throte;
> The murmure, and the cherles rebelling,
> The groyning, and the pryvee empoysoning: etc. 2.

An especially clear example is the careful speech of the herald as he outlines the rules of the game in the tournament of Palamon and Arcite. 3.

Of the complete sections of exposition in Chaucer's work, the best known is undoubtedly the description of the House of Fame which is put into the mouth of the Eagle. This section is so excellent an example of concise, coherent exposition that it should be helpful to undertake a careful analysis of it. By the use of marginal notes I will attempt to point out the structure with which this famous passage is built.

1. B. lines 1-14

2. A. lines 2452-2460

3. A. lines 2534-2560

1. Analysis of House of Fame

First shalt thou heren wher she dwelleth
And so thyn owne book hit telleth;
Hir paleys stant, as I shal seye,
Right even in middes of the weye
Betwixen hevene, erthe, and see;
That, what-so-ever in al these three
Is spoken, in privee or aperte,
The wey therto is so overte,
That every soun mot to hit pace,
Or what so comth fro any tonge,
Be hit rouned, red, or songe,
Or spoke in seurtee or drede,
Certein, hit moste thider nede.

Introduction
Initial Statement of Theme

Now herkne wel;for-why I wille — Specific Reminder for Emphasis
Tellen thee a propre skile,
And worthy demonstracioun
In myn imagynacioun.
Geffrey, thou wost right wel this, — I Passage from Boethius
That every kindly thing that is,
Hath a kindly stede ther he
May best in hit conserved be; — First argument
Unto which place everything,
Through his kindly enclyning,
Moveth for to come to,
Whan that hit is awey therfro;
As thus;lo, thou mayst al day see — Example no. 1
That any thing that hevy be,
As stoon or leed, or thing of wighte,
And ber hit never so hyne on highte,
Lat go thyn hadn, hit falleth doun.
Right so seye I by fyre or soun, — Transitional expression
Or smoke, or other thinges lighte, — Example no. 2
Alwey they seke upward on high te;
Whyl ech of hem is at his large,
Light thing up,and dounward charge.
And for this cause mayst thou see — Transitional word
That every river to the see — Example no. 3
Enclyned is to go, by kinde.
And by these skilles, as I finde,
Hath fish dwellinge in floode and see, — Example no. 4
And trees eek in erthe be.
Thus every thing, by this reoun,
Hath his propre mansioun,
To which hit sekethto repaire,
As ther hit shulde not apaire.

Repetition
Conclusion of I

Lo, this sentence is knowen couthe
Of every philosophres mouthe,
As Aristotle and dan Platon, — Authority
And other clerkes many oon;
And to confirme my resoun,
Thou wost wel this, that speche is soun, — II a Second argument
Or elles no man mighte hit here;
Now herkne what I wol thee lere. — Specific Reminder

Known to unknown

Soun is noght but air y-broken, — II & Topic statement
And every speche that is spoken,
Loud or privee, foul or fair,
In his substaunce is but air;
For as flaumbe is bur lighted smoke, — comparison
Right so soun is air y-broke.
But this may be in many wyse,
Of which I wil thee two devyse, — Particulars
As soun that comth of pype or harpe.
For whan a pype is blowen sharpe,
The air is twist with violence,
And rent; lo, this is my sentence ; — Specific Reminder
Eek, whan men harpe-stringes smyte,
Whether hit be moche or lyte,
Lo, with the strook the air to-breketh;
Right so hit breketh whan men speketh.
Thus wost thou wel what thing is speche. Conclusion by II
Now hennesforth I wol thee teche,
How every speche, or noise, or soun,
Through his multiplicacioun,
Thogh hit were pyped of a mouse,
Moot mede come to Fames House.
I preve hit thus--tak hede now-- — III = I + II; Topic Statement; third argument; Specific Reminder
By experience; for if that thou
Throwe of water now a stoon, — Example
Wel wost thou, hit wol make anoon
A litel roundel as a cercle,
Paraventure brood as a covercle;
And right anoon thou shalt see weel,
That wheel wol cause another wheel,
And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,
Every cercle causing other,
Wyder than himselve was;
And thus, fro roundel to compas,
Ech aboute other goinge,
Caused of otheres steringe,
And multiplying ever-mo,
Til that hit be so fer y-go
That hit at botherbrinkes be.
Althogh thou mowe hit not y-see — Seen to unseen
Above, hit goth yet alway under,
Although thou thenke hit a gret wonder.
And whoso saith of trouthe I varie,
Bid him proven the contrarie.
And right thus every word, y-wis, — Conjexpression
That loud or privee spoken is,
Moveth first an air aboute,
And of this moving, out of doute,
Another air anoon is meved,
As I have of the water preved, — Repetition
That every cercle causeth other.
Right so of air, my leverbrother;
Everich air in other stereth

Climax — Simple to complex — Unknown to known — Parallel construction

More and more, and speche up bereth,
Or vois, or noise, or word, or soun,
Ay through multiplicacioun,
Til hit be atte House of Fame; – Climax
Tak hit in ernest or in game,
Now have I told, if thou have minde, Transitional word
How speche or soun, of pure kinde, Summary of II
Enclyned is upward to meve;
This, mayst thou fele, wel I preve.
And that the mansioun, y-wis,
That every thing enclyned to is, Summary of I
Hath his kindeliche stede:
Than sheweth hit, withouten drede,
That kindely the mansioun
Of every speche, of every soun,
Be hit either foul or fair,
Hath his kinde place in air.
And sin that every thing, that is
Out of his kinde place, y-wis
Moveth thider for to go – Repetition
If hit a-weye be therfro,
As I before have preved thee,
Hit sheweth, every soun, pardee,
Moveth kindely to pace
Al up into his kindely place.
And this place of which I telle,
Ther as Fame list to dwelle,
Is set amiddes of these three, – Repetition
Heven, erthe, and eek the see,
As most conservatif the soun.
Than is this the conclusioun,
That every speche of every man
As I thee telle first began,
Moveth up on high to pace
Kindely to Fames place. 1. Conclusion Summary of III

From a standpoint of Unity this selection cannot be improved. It follows a very definite plan. First the subject is stated, briefly and simply, then it is developed carefully, each thought leading to the next. Finally the introductory statement is repeated as a conclusion. There are three divisions, the third linking up the first two. The idea is developed by example and instance, by association, and by authority. There are no details which do not point directly to the end. With the exception of one challenge and one "believe it or not", not a single line

1. House of Fame: lines 711-852

could be subtracted from the whole, and not an additional line is needed.

As for Coherence, the exposition follows a logical arrangement, and in its development passes both from the known to the unknown and from the simple to the complex. Conjunctive expressions keep the progress clearly in mind. Each new thought is carefully introduced by a defining or topic statement, and the divisions between each part are clearly marked by transitional sentences. In two cases parallel construction aids clearness.

Emphasis is gained by arrangement. The important statements are found at the beginning and end of each section. Inverted sentence order in lines 741 and 762 accentuate the thought. Frequent repetition of important statements results in conviction. Repetition of the word <u>kindely</u> (by nature or naturally) adds weight to the proofs. And in several cases explicit reminders sharply arrest the attention. An amusing example of concreteness is found in line 785.

Altogether this exposition, written in simple terms, in an order that is easily followed, brief and compact, is thoroughly convincing. The eagle cannot forbear a gleeful word of praise at his own skill, and demands of his listener,

> Telle me this feithfully,
> Have I not preved thus simply,
> Withouten any subtilee
> Of speche, or gret prolixitee
> Of termes of philosophye,
> Of figures of poetrye,
> Or colours of rethoryke?
> Pardee, hit oghte thee to lyke;
> For hard langage and hard matere
> Is encombrous for to here
> At ones; wost thou not wel this? 1.

1. H.of F. lines 853-865

To which Chaucer replies, somewhat laconically, "Yis."

2. It seems sacrilege to consider a less perfect specimen after so skillful a piece of exposition. But it is necessary to see what degree of perfection Chaucer was capable of attaining before we can understand how he adapted this perfect form to suit a special need. The exposition of the Canon Yeoman's Tale, which makes up the greater part of the tale itself, is an excellent illustration of the adaptation of rule to suit circumstance. The expostion here may be divided into two parts, that of the Prima Pars, which is concerned with a general discussion of the trade, and that of the tale itself, which is an explanation of a special manifestation of the trade. As has been mentioned before, the narrative element of the second part provides a sharp contrast to that of the first.

The first discussion is unified only in the sense that it deals especially with the trade of the alchemist. Within that general subject there is no special plan. A sketchy development by particulars, with a special favoring of the figure distributio, leads the reader from one thought to another, rapidly and dizzily. Details are mentioned in hit or miss fashion as they occur to the over-wrought mind of the Yeoman. One section is organized, the five lines dealing with the Four spirits and the Seven Bodies [1], but this is only because he has memorized them, and they bear no particular relation to the rest of the speech. Of Coherence there is none, no logical order, and the Yeoman himself apologizes for this. [2] Only the simplest conjunctive expressions are used, and no new statement seems to lead

1. G. lines 819-829
2. See page 16 for quotation

from any other. There is little clearness and no attempt at climax. Emphasis is only on confusion, and this is skillfully accomplished--intentionally, I believe. In no better way could Chaucer have revealed the nervous and resentful nature of the Canon Yeoman.

In contrast to this aimless exposition is the description of the trick employed by the chanoun in the tale itself. Here there is unity arising from the narrative, which limits detail and causes its arrangement by time and procedure. The minor interruptions that occur serve to add emphasis. Coherence is secured by following the natural order of time and process. Time is indicated frequently by such words as anon, whyle, whan, etc. There is an element of suspense and a sense of climax, as the value of the money invested increases with each trial. Emphasis is secured by interruption, in one case by an invocation, and later by exclamatio:

This fals chanoun, the foule feend him fecche! 1.

Stress is also laid on the innocence of the priest and the cursedness of the chanoun. Suspense is gained by the prolonging of the climax in the discovery of the first bit of silver. Irony also adds its note as the priest begs to learn:

This noble craft and this subtilitee 2.

In this case the general background of the trade is as vague as ever, but the account of the trick itself is in each case very clear. The difference between these two accounts lies in the fact that in the last account there is a definite purpose which is lacking in the first.

1. G. line 1159
2. G. lines1247

3. Of Chaucer's venture into the realm of pure exposition I hesitate to speak. The Astrolabe seems to forbid analysis. The ignorance of ancient astrology on the one hand, and the superior knowledge of the universe on the other, make the modern student reluctant to approach this treatise which was intended for a ten year-old child. Sheer boredom adds to this reluctance. I hope it is not rationalization to say that for practical value Chaucer's methods of exposition as already discovered, employed in narrative and serving a higher purpose, are more important to our purpose than the methods by which this technical and scientific matter is demonstrated.

Yet as a textbook it must be admitted that the Astrolabe is marvelously clear and well arranged. It was intended to accompany the instrument itself, to which it constantly refers. In Part I each section of this instrument is carefully explained, following a definite order of position. In Part II Chaucer proceeds to the use of this device, with rules for determining the altitude of the sun, the position of the stars, etc, giving often specific cases as illustration. Barring a little over-expansion in deference to the age of the reader, this treatise is a model of clear exposition of medieval science.

3. It must follow from these examples that the theory that lay behind Chaucer's practice of exposition was a very simple one--merely that the aim of this form is the clearest and most direct presentation possible of the facts to be conveyed. That Chaucer knew the rules he has demonstrated by following them rigidly and intelligently; that he had thoroughly assimilated them he later proved by casting off such as he did not need and adjusting

the rest to meet his needs. But it is evident that as the possibilities of literature were gradually unfolded to him, he realized that there is no place for lengthy exposition in narrative, and in his later work he seldom employed it. Yet when he chose to develop a subject in this way he attacked it with the same ability that made for brilliant and terse description and narration, and he succeeded in turning out the same sort of work, clear-cut and polished in its final effect.

b. Argumentation

1. As we turn to a study of medieval argumentation we discover a maze of conventions and regulations that requires a very special treatment at greater length than could be devoted to it here. In the first place we have the ancient school of logic still flourishing, basing its teaching on the ancient art of oratory, rigid in its patterns, and endless in its subdivisions of arguments. Then we have the dictamen already mentioned, basing its form upon logic, but emphasizing also style as applying to written work, and introducing rhetoric in an elaborate form. Lastly we have preaching, the most popular and most generally studied form in the Middle Ages, a form of argumentation also based on logic, but depending less on its composition than on the emotional appeal of the eloquence of the individual preacher. The skeleton of all of these forms is precisely the same as the structure we employ today. First comes the exordium, or initial statement, which should arrest the reader's attention, then the narratio, statement of facts,

which should be "concise, transparently clear, and plausible", 1. and finally the conclusio, or logical result or proof. In elaborating this form the method dear to the hearts of these medieval writers was the use of exempla, of which an infinite number have come down to us.

2. Without stopping to consider adequately the rhetorical forms of medieval argumentation, we sill turn directly to the specimens offered us in Chuacer's poetry. The argumentation of Chaucer, we may arbitrarily divide into three main classes. To the first class belong the general and incidental observations similar to those placed in the first class of exposition. Next we may consider the complete arguments, both formal and informal, For the third class we must note the expanded exempla, and the stories with a purpose.

a. The general observations that make up the first class are mainly in the form of sententia. They are so numerous that many must occur offhand to even a casual reader of Chaucer. In the House of Fame, he declares:

> For tyme y-lost, this knowen ye,
> By no way may recovered be. 1

At the death of Arcite in the Knight's Tale, we find the words:

> Infinite been the sorwes and the teres
> Of olde folk, and folk of tendre yeres. 2.

And later on the same page Egeus philosophizes:

> 'Right as there deyed never man',quod he,
> 'That he ne livede in erthe in som degree,
> Right so ther livede never man',he seyde,
> 'In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.
> This world nis but a thurghfare ful of wo
> And we ben pilgrimes passinge to and fro;
> Deeth is an ende of every worldly sore.' 3.

1. H.ofF. lines 1257-1258
2. A. lines 2827-2828
3. A. lines 2843-2849

Occasionally an exemplum or a brief argument accompanies these statements, but in general they stand alone.

8. One of the best specimens of informal argument occurs in the Wife of Bath's tale. This section is complete in itself and lends itself readily to the same sort of analysis as was given to the exposition of the House of Fame.

8, a. Analysis of Argumentation

(The Knight has just accused his ancient wife of coming " of so lowe a kinde", whereupon he is treated to the following sermon.)

But for ye speken of swich gentillesse } Statement of first
As is descended out of old richesse, } counter-argument
That therfore sholden ye be gentil men, }
Swich arrogance is nat worth an hen. — Contradiction
Loke who that is most vertuous alway, I Indirect statement
Privee and apert, and most entendeth ay of first argement
To do the gentil dedes that he can,
And tak him for the grettest gentilman.
Crist wol, we clayme of him our gentillesse, Ia
Nat of our eldres for hir old richesse,
For thogh they yeve us al hir heritage,
For which we clayme to been of heigh parage, statement
Yet may they nat biquethe, for no-thing,
To noon of us hir vertuous living,
That made hem gentil men y-called be;
And bad us folwen hem in swich degree.
Wel can the wyse poete of Florence, Authority
That highte Dant, speken in this sentence;
Lo in swich maner rym is Dantes tale:
"Ful selde up ryseth by his branches smale
Prowesse of man;for god, of his goodnesse,
Wol that of him we clayme our gentillesse;"
For of our eldres may we nothing clayme — Repetition
But temporel thing, that man may hurte and mayme.
Eek every wight wot this as wel as I, Conjunctive word
If gentillesse were planted naturelly Ib Hypothesis
Un-to a certeyn linage, doun the lyne,
Privee ne apert, than wolde they never fyne
To doon of gentillesse the faire affyce;
They mighte do no vileinye or vyce.
Take fyr, and ber it in the derkeste hous Example
Bitwix this and the mount of Caucasus,
And lat men shette the dores and go thenne;
Yet wol the fyr as faire lye and brenne,
As twenty thousand men might it biholde;

His office naturel ay wol it holde,
Up peril of my lyf, til that it dye. — Emphatic statement
Heer may ye see wel, how that genterye Transition
Is nat annexed to possessioun,
Sith folk ne doon hir operacioun
Alwey, as dooth the fyr, lo! in his kinde.
For, god it woot, men may wel often finde
A lordes sone do shame and vileinye; Example
And he that wol han prys of his gentrye
For he was boren of a gentil hous,
And hadde hise eldres nable and vertuous,
And nil him-selven do no gentil dedis,
Ne folwe his gentil auncestre that deed is,
He nis nat gentil, be he duk or erl;
For vileyns sinful dedes make a cherl.
For gentillesse nis but renomee
Of thyne auncestres, for hir heigh bountee,
Which is a strange thing to thy persone.
Thy gentillesse cometh fro god alone; Repetition
Than comth our verray gentillesse of grace, and
It was nothing biquethe us with our place. Summary of I
Thenketh how noble, as seith Valerius,
Was thilke Tullius Hostilius, Authority
That out of povert roos to heigh noblesse.
Redeth Senek, and redeth eek Boece,
Ther shul ye seen expres that it no drede is,
That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis; Conclusion of I
And therfore, leve housbond, I thus conclude,
Al were it that myne auncestres were rude,
Yet may the hye god, and so hope I,
Grante me grace to liven vertuously.
Thanne am I gentil, whan that I biginne,
To liven vertuously and weyve sinne.
And ther-as ye of povert me repreve, II Statement of Second
The hye god, on whom that we bileve, Counter-argument
In wilful povert chees to live his lyf. II a First argument
And certes every man, mayden, or wyf,
May understonde that Jesus, hevene king,
Ne wolde nat chese a vicious living.
Glad povert is an honest thing, certeyn; II Statement
This wol Senek and othere clerkes seyn.
Who-so that halt him payd of his poverte,
I holde him riche, al hadde he nat a sherte.
He that coveyteth is a povre wight,
For he wolde han that is nat in his might.
But he that noght hath, ne coveyteth have,
Is riche , al-though ye holde him but knave. Repetition
Verray povert, it singeth proprely;
Juvenal seith of povert merily:
"The povre man, whan he goth by the weye, Authority
Bifore the theves he may singe and pleye." Instance
Povert is hateful good, and, as I gesse,
A ful greet bringer out of bisinesse;
A greet amender eek of sapience
To him that taketh it in pacience.

Povert is this, al-though it seme elenge:
Possessioun, that no wight wol chalenge.
Povert ful ofte, whan a man is lowe, Instance II a
Maketh his god and ek him-self to knowe.
Povert a spectacle is, as thinketh me,
Thurgh which he may his verray frendes see.
And therfore, sire, sin that I noght yow greve, Conclusion of II
Of my povert na-more ye me repreve. 1.

This argument is unusual because it is in a sense a double one. It is developed by a refutation of the two main arguments of the other side, and is thus an answer to two accusations. In the first argument, on "gentillesse", the initial statement is made by way of a repetition of a previous statement by the knight. The first argument follows, backed up by authorities. The second argument takes the form of a hypothesis based on the opposite contention, developed by analogy, and then proved false. An example and three more authorities follow, till the conclusion is reached in the form of a personal application. In the second argument, on "povert", the statement is delayed until after the first example, and its authority. Restatement and another authority follow, then a cumulation, or list of persuasive items, till a second personal application comes as conclusion. The two arguments are not joined in any way.

The Unity of the argument arises from its purpose, and though the style is informal, almost every line does lead to one end. The leading statements are supported by example and authority. Coherence of a loose sort is obtained by conjunctive words and phrases, and by topic statements at the introduction of each new idea. Inverted sentence structure and repetition

1. D. lines 1109-1206

are the main sources of emphasis, and concrete images intensify the ideas.

Some of the short poems of Chaucer's early years illustrate this informal type of argument. For example, The Former Age opens with a topic statement; statements and examples follow, till we reach a summary which attacks the present age.

Though it is a poor bit of writing and decidedly out of place in a short tale, the digression on the fickleness of man found in the Manciple's Tale is an interesting study by itself as a demonstration of development by example. 1. Here the Manciple proves his introductory point, that nature may not be restrained, by pointing out first a bird, then a cat, then a she-wolf, and finally man. The concluding statement is a restatement of the initial thought, with a slightly new twist. There is unity in the fact that the examples all present one thought, the unaccountable fickleness of the appetite. Under the heading of coherence we note the development of these examples from the familiar to the less familiar and from the simple to the less simple (for the argument is hardly complex). Emphasis is gained by climatic order and by explicit reminders.

As we pass to the formal type of argumentation we meet such an immediate change in tone that we do not wonder that most readers are permanently discouraged at the first glance. The Tale of Melibeus is a most deadly specimen of the worst sort of argumentation. Yet, on reading the speeches, one is compelled to admire the patience and ingenuity with which these intricate, hair-splitting arguments are so logically arranged. Every possible

1. H. lines 160-195

sub-division of every point is amply considered in a logical, arithmetical order. The general methods of argument used are: the direct refutation of statements, the different interpretation of statements-especially of Bible passages, and the constant reference to authority to add weight to statements.[1] The entire tale submits itself to topical outline with ease; the headings and sub-headings are carefully indicated, and the points under each methodically enumerated. Every possible argument is followed through painstakingly to a conclusion, and the bits fit together like a gigantic puzzle into a perfectly rounded whole. Yet the material is stretched so far and spread so thin that any original color has faded out, and the mind soon becomes wearied of trying to trace its lifeless patterns.

b. Only slightly different is the Parson's Tale, which closes the Canterbury Tales. The construction here, however, is inferior to that in the Tale of Melibeus. Since it is a sermon rather than a narrative, there are no counter-arguments, but the points are developed with the same tediousness that ~~the~~ marked the former tale. The total effect is marred by a long digression, longer than the tale itself, on the Seven Deadly Sins.

c. The heading of the third class of argumentation, stories with a purpose, is almost too inclusive to be useful. In an age when edification was the chief aim of literature it would be difficult to find many stories that lacked a moral. In the Canterbury Tales even the fabliaux have a definite purpose, not moral but malicious, as motivation. However, among the

1. Chaucer quotes here Ovid, the Old Testament, New Testament, Seneca, Common Proverbs, Peter Alfonce, Clerks'writings, Tullius, Cato, Isope, Cassidore, and Pamphilles.

tales we recognize certain ones as having more of his argumentative nature than the others. In this class therefore we would place the distinctly moral tales of the Monk, the Pardoner, the second Nun, Melibeus and the Parson. The tragedies that compose the Monk's tale are typical of the exempla popular in medieval preaching. They are unified in purpose, that is they all portray the fall of pride. Many end conventionally with proverbs or sententia. To cite one case, the story of Sampson ends with the caution:

> Beth war by this ensample old and playn
> That no men telle hir conseil til hir wyves
> Of swiche thing as they wolde han secree fayn,
> If that it touche hir limmes or hir lyves. 1.

and after the fall of Hercules the Monk warns us:

> Beth war, for whan that fortune list to glose,
> Than wayteth she hir man to overthrowe
> By swich a wey as he wolde leest suppose. 2.

The stories of the Monk's Tale are remarkable examples in miniature of the best rhetorical forms of the day, and they reveal forcibly how very dry and empty mere rhetoric can be. Chaucer was surely attempting to call our attention to this fact in the tale that followed. The Nun Priest's Tale also employs the meaningless ornaments of rhetoric, but with a touch of satire that discloses Chaucer's true attitude toward such decoration. This tale also ends with a strongly pointed moral:

> Lo, swich it is for to be recchelees,
> And necligent, and truste on flaterye.
> But ye that holden this tale a folye,
> As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
> Taketh the moralitee, good men.
> For seint Paul seith, that al that writen is,
> To our doctryne it is y-write, y-wis.
> Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille. 3.

1. B. lines 3281-3284
2. B. lines 3330-3332
3. B. lines 4646-4633

Yet in our memory of the tale the rhetoric fades away, and even the application is forgotten, while fresh and clear the pictures of Chanticleer and his wife stand out, as no character in the Monk's tale could, colorful additions to the personalities of the Canterbury Tales.

The Pardoner's Tale, a perfect sermon in the form of an elaborate exemplum, I am neglecting here, since its discussion properly belongs under the narrative head.

I am a little undecided as to whether or not to include the marriage group in this class of tales with a purpose. The four tales of which it is composed are all written to present varying sides of the eternal problem of the mastery of husband or wife. The Wife of Bath begins the discussion by telling a tale which asserts the "maistrye" of women over their husbands. The Clerk replies with a tale which seems innocent enough, but which is finally twisted to ridicule her opinion. The Marchant's Tale presents the conventional picture of an over-credulous husband and a deceitful wife; and the Franklin's Tale suggests the answer to the question--true cooperation between husband and wife.

3. It would seem on the surface that the field of argumentation was the one in which Chaucer succeeded least in freeing himself from the conventions of his age. We might surmise that he did not interest himself sufficiently in the form to work out a definite theory for his own use. Yet the Pardoner's Tale, with its perfect blend of argumentation and narration, upsets this theory. Perhaps we may believe that Chaucer felt obliged to

include such widely popular types as are represented in the Monk's tales, even though he could not always repress his impatience with them.

I believe that the reason for this lack of evidence of a definite argumentative theory lies in the fact that, after all, Chaucer was not a preacher, and that he seldom cared to convince but only desired to present. So we may suggest that the Pardoner's Tale , apart from its accompanying sermon, is itself a representation of Chaucer's theory of argumentation, and that the straightforward presentation of a situation, which leaves the reader free to make his own generalization, was for him the most satisfactory of all argumentative methods.

C. Description

In the medieval school of rhetoric description was important chiefly as a leading method of amplification. Gaufred de Vinsauf devotes a good deal of attention to this form, and Professor Manly's discussion of his treatise is so clear that I would like to quote part of it here.

"Elaborate patterns and formulas are given for describing persons, places, things, and seasons. If the description applies to externals, the features to be described are enumerated and the order in which they are to be taken up is strictly specified; if it concerns a character, the characteristics to be mentioned are listed, and those appropriate to each sex, age, social status, employment temperment and career, are set forth in detail. Specimens are given to illustrate the doctrines. These descriptions are not, like those in Chaucer's later work, determined by the

requirements of the situation in which they occur. Their use is purely conventional, for the purpose of amplifying the material, and their construction is purely mechanical. They are merely opportunities for the writer to display his rhetorical training." 1.

In the specimens published ,certain conventions were followed which will be recognized by any reader of Chaucer. We find the convention of the May morning setting, the garden sweet with gay, unidentified flowers, the hunt descriptions, and a love of detail in describing scenes such as banquets, battles, and tournaments, especially with regard to the etiquette of the occasion. Likewise there are an astounding number of figures and artificial patterns such as distributio (itemizing), frequentatio (cumulation of detail), similitude (simile), etc. 2.

2. All of these conventions may be found throughout Chaucer's work, but especially are they discovered in the earlier poems, the Book of the Duchess and the Parlement of Foules . The remarkable portraits of the Canterbury Tales belong to such an advanced stage of development that they are hardly related to the early forms at all. After a consideration of Chaucer's description as a whole,this progress toward individuality will be apparent.

a. In the description of nature the conventionality displays itself most noticeably and most enduringly in Chaucer's work. The reason for this is undoubtedly that to Chaucer nature could never be more than a background for the drama of man and his

1. Manly: Chaucer and the Rhetoricians, page 11
2. For list see Baldwin: Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic, page 305

emotions, and that therefore it did not merit much attention. Thus in Chaucer's work, with one possible exception, we never find any suggestion of the interplay of setting with character and plot that is so stressed in modern literature; the setting is only a charming tapestry backdrop that never changes as the scenes shift before it. Even in nature description, however, we can trace a slight development away from conventionality, both in the actual descriptions and in the attitude that they reflect.

From the Book of the Duchess I will not quote, but readers will remember that it employs all the conventions listed above. In the Parlement of Foules also we have a conventional garden, a "grene mede", a river, and bright flowers, birds singing, and sweet odors filling the air. Yet certain colorful pictures stand out:

> That swommen ful of smale fisshes lighte,
> With finnes rede and scales silver-brighte. 1.

and

> The litel conyes to hir pleye gunne hye. 2.

Throughout this description we note an emphasis on sense appeal, color, smell , and sound.

In the Hous of Fame, due to the unusual setting of the action, we have two scenes a little out of the ordinary. Chaucer steps out of the temple of glass:

> Then saw I but a large feld,
> As fer as that I mighte see,
> Withouten toun or hous or tree,
> Or bush, or gras, or ered lond,
> For al the feld nas but of sand. 3.

1. P.of F. lines 188-189
2. " " " 193
3. H.of F. " 482-487

The emphasis on distance and empty space in this selection makes a clear-cut picture, far removed from the conventional garden scene. Some critics have attempted to attach an allegorical significance to this picture, but others prefer to accept it as it stands, considering it merely a transition from the temple of glass to the appearance of the eagle. The other scene is what we might call an "airplane view "- which was a novel vantage point in the fourteenth century. Chaucer, in the grasp of the eagle, looks down on fields and plains, great lakes, rivers, cities, and ships sailing on the sea, and finally rises so high

> That al the world, as to myn ye,
> No more semed than a prikke; 1.

In Troilus and Criseyde one stanza bears a clear indication of an advance in descriptive power. Chaucer is bringing to a close the day on which Criseyde has admitted her love.

> The dayes honour, and the hevenes ye,
> The nightes fo, al this clepe I the sonne,
> Gan westren faste, and dounward for to wrye,
> As he that hadde his dayes cours y-ronne;
> And whyte thinges wexen dimme and donne
> For lak of light, and sterres for to appere,
> That she and al hir folk in wente y-fere. 2.

In this brief stanza Chaucer passes from meaningless rhetorical expression to simple statement of the details he has observed at twilight. His words, "al this clepe I the sonne," seem to suggest that he felt a dissatisfaction with the elaborate metaphors he had employed, and felt the need of a direct statement. Without doubt this is an early touch of the satire he later directed toward "heigh style".

1. H.OfF. lines 906-907
2. T.& C. " " 904-910 Bk. II

2.

By the time that the Canterbury Tales are reached, setting has become an ever-receding background. Mere suggestions suffice to outline it. We still occasionally catch the song of birds and the fragrance of spring flowers; the May morning convention has become one of Chaucer's peculiar "trade-marks". Miss Hadow points out[1] that, like Milton, Chaucer always contrives to give a sense of freshness and sweetness to the landscape, and that it always seems English. But in the main, so intent are we on our dramatic situation and on the characters themselves that background hardly matters, and if it is indistinct we seldom take to trouble to notice.

One very lovely, though still conventional, description of a dawn occurs in the Knight's Tale:

> The bisy larke, messager of day,
> Saluеth in hir song the morwe gray;
> And fyry Phebus ryseth up so brighte,
> That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,
> And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
> The silver dropes, hangin on the leves. 2.

But presently human nature intrudes itself even into setting, and Chaucer looks at his winter scene from the point of view of human reactions:

> The bittre frostes, with the sleet and reyn,
> Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.
> Janus sit by the fyr, with double berd,
> And drinketh of his bugle-horn the wyn.
> Biforn him stant braun of the tusked swyn,
> And 'Nowel' cryeth every lusty man. 3.

One very decided exception to a previous statement that there is no interplay of setting and character occurs in the second book of Troilus and Criseyde, when the beauty of the

1. Hadow: Chaucer and His Times, page 62
2. A. lines 1491-1496
3. F. " " 1250-1255

garden setting plays its part in softening the heart of Criseyde. Another possible exception occurs in the Legend of Good Women, when Ariadne wakes and, finding Theseus absent, runs barefoot to the strand, crying after him to return:

> The holwe rokkes answerde her again;
> No man she saw, and yit shyned the mone. 1.

The contrast between the cold passive moonlight on the rocks and the turmoil of Ariadne's heart is an effective bit of writing and is so upsetting to the theory of the conventionality of Chaucer's nature description that one is almost tempted to cheat and call it inadvertent. Perhaps it is an indication of what he could have made of setting had he chosen to give it more attention.

Development of technique becomes more apparent as we turn to descriptions of places and things. The realistic touch of the little dog in the otherwise conventional setting of the Book of the Duchess marks a very early attempt to rely on actual observation:

> Hit com and creep to me as lowe,
> Right as hit hadde me y-knowe,
> Hild doun his heed and joyned his eres,
> And leyde al smothe doun his heres. 2.

The description of music both here and in the Parlement of Foules, though quite likely a paraphrase of some source, shows excellent sound appeal:

> Of instrumentes of strenges in acord
> Herde I so pleye a ravisshing swetnesse,
> That god, that maker is of al and lord,
> Ne herde never better, as I gesse;
> Therwith a wind, unnethe hit might be lesse,
> Made in the leves grene a noise softe
> Acordant to the foules songe on-lofte. 3.

1. L.of G.W. lines 2192-2193
2. B. of D. " " 391-394
3. P .of F. " " 197-203

2. a. One of the most detailed descriptions of place is that of the House of Fame.[1] Here Chaucer has followed carefully the order of progression, giving his details from the point of view of one moving nearer to the object viewed. First we receive a general impression of the beauty of the house, its strangeness, the material from which it is made, and its many windows and niches. There is a slight delay as Chaucer's attention is drawn to the people round about. Eighty lines further on he espies the gate and praises it, then enters the hall. From this point on there is a sense of confusion. His first impression is of many people. Then he tells of the golden hall, and finally brings us before Fame herself, thus ending at the highest point in the order of climax.

His account of the wicker House of Rumor[2] follows the same order of approach, securing ever greater clarity and interest. Again we have a general impression first, a report of the strange appearance of the house and of its swift turning. Then he tells us its material, and, after a slight delay, its size and shape. Finally he enters, and his first impression is one of stillness; all motion has suddenly stopped. We never see the inside of this house, for a second confusion of people and conversation engages Chaucer's attention from that moment.

These descriptions are arresting and worthy of study. The slight sense of vagueness and confusion that blurs the image may arise from the allegorical nature of the story, and from the reasonable lack of clear-cut imagery in a picture entirely formed in the imagination. The impressionistic style gives one

1. H.Of F. Bk. III lines 1110-1520
2. " " " " " 1916-2035

very nearly the same feeling of a dream as did the hunt scene in the Book of the Duchess.

In contrast to this scene is the account of the lists in the Knight's Tale.[1] Here the author could be definite, for not only was there no allegory to consider, but he had certainly seen, and possibly helped to prepare, just such lists. That his interest in such matters was keen is shown by his careful mention of size and of seating arrangement. In this case also we are directed from the general to the particular. The description of the temple of Venus, at one corner of the lists, shows a return to conventional form, but the lines devoted to the temple of Mars show more strength. Notice the mention of trees:

> With knotty knarry bareyn trees olde
> Of stubbes sharpe and hidous to biholde;
> In which ther ran a rumbel and a swough,
> As though a storm sholde bresten every bough; 2.

In these lines Chaucer, besides declining an opportunity for itemizing (as in the Parlement of Foules) has caught the spirit of the scene in his suggestive words and repetition of harsh sound. The details of pain and cruelty that follow surely never originated in a model exercise. For example:

> The cook y-scalded, for al his longe ladel. 3.

As we reach the temple of Diana, we read boredom between the lines. Chaucer has lost interest in these old forms and is anxious to return to his characters. Hereafter we find that the descriptions are briefer, more realistic, and only inserted when they accelerate rather than retard the movement of the narrative.

1. A. lines 1886-2092
2. A. " " 1977-1980
3. A. " " 2020

Of the brief bits of description in Chaucer's later work, two are sure to attract the attention of his readers. The first is that of the bronze horse in the Squier's Tale.

> For it so heigh was, and so brood and long,
> So wel proporcioned for to ben strong,
> Right as it were a stede of Lumbardye;
> Ther-with so horsly, and so quik of ye
> As it a gentil Poileys courser were.
> For certes, fro his tayl un-to his ere,
> Nature ne art ne coude him nat amende. 1.

What an entrancing picture that one word "horsely" can create for us. For in it Chaucer has suggested all the fine points of a high-bred animal--perfect conformation, sleek rippling coat, and above all such proud spirit! The "brighte eye" gives the final touch--and all in one line! The second attractive bit is a description of place in Chaucer's late manner, found in the opening lines of the Clerk's Tale:

> Ther is at the west syde of Itaille,
> Doun at the rote of Vesulus the colde,
> A lusty playne, habundant of vitaille,
> Wher many a tour and toun thou mayst biholde, 2.

With brevity, directness, and simplicity, setting is here amply suggested, and the lines have the appeal and the sense of satisfaction that are the result of pure writing.

C. It is in the delineation of character, however, that Chaucer's amazing development is fully revealed. Somehow he learned, through his own experimentation, how to create, with a few skillful touches, flesh and blood persons, moving through his pages, speaking and thinking, and above all feeling. There are, to be sure, a few pictures without life or individuality; the two foreign kings in the Knight's Tale remain pictures, colorful, clear, and detailed, but never human. But in the

1. F. lines 190-197
2. E. " " 57-60

main it is the humanness of Chaucer's characters that draws us, and Chaucer knew how to select details for the accomplishment of that end.

1. Even in his earliest work we see a triumph over convention. The description of Blanche in the Book of the Duchess has been found to follow item by item the model recommended by Gaufred de Vinsauf.[1] But one or two subtle changes should not be overlooked. For one thing, Chaucer puts the eulogy of the dead Duchess into the mouth of the one most fit to praise her, her husband; the conventional hyperbole seems more natural so, and may be charged to the overwhelming emotion of the knight. Also, in several cases Chaucer varies the order of the old catalog, even omitting a few details, leaving a slightly incoherent impression proper to the grief-stricken husband. This adaptation of accepted models occurs again in the Parlement of Foules when Chaucer attempts a slight differentiation of character in contrasting the polite reserve of the first tercel with the rude belligerence of the second.

How amazingly Chaucer's conception of character had grown may be seen in Troilus and Criseyde. This story, as treated by many authors, had been a conventional love-romance; by a few subtle changes Chaucer made it a psychological novel. First, where the story had always been that of Troilus, Chaucer shifts the emphasis to make it a story of Criseyde. In Criseyde Chaucer has no easy problem, yet he succeeds in impressing the reader both with her fickleness and with her gentleness and sweetness.

1. Manly: Chaucer and the Rhetoricians, page 11

Secondly, he introduces Pandarus, who is far from the conventional go-between and whose presence transforms the whole story. Pandarus is never definitly described; he is nowhere in the spotlight; but he is important and unforgettable.

The height of characterization is reached in the Canterbury Tales. Think of the Wife of Bath, the Monk, ~~Chanticleer~~, and the Prioress. These are memorable portraits, but better still they step out of their frames and speak and move about, so that our pictures become what Huxley calls "three dimensional and solid".[1] So variously are the characters of the Prologue developed as the tales progress that we arrive at the conclusion that the Prologue itself must have been considered only in the light of a Dramatis Personae, and that without witnessing the whole action we cannot claim to know the characters at all.[2] All of which leads to a consideration of the ways in which Chaucer contrived to set his characters before us. For every device employed by modern writers seems to have been known to him.

a. First, he did so by direct comment. Of Criseyde we learn first her noble character and conduct;then in a few words Chaucer states:

> She nas not with the leste of hir stature,
> But all hir limes so wel answeringe
> Weren to womanhode that creature
> Was never lasse mannish in seminge.
> And eek the pure wyse of here meninge
> Shewede wel, that men might in hir gesse
> Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse. 2.

(Notice in this quotation the litotes in the first line, and also the words "lasse mannish", another of the expressions which point

1. Huxley: Essays New and Old,Page 267
2. T.& C. Bk. I, lines 281-287

directly and emphatically to the essential quality of the person he wishes to describe.) Much later in the story, well into the fifth book, in fact, we are given an actual picture of Criseyde:

> Criseyde mene was of hir stature,
> Ther-to of shap, of face, and eek of chere,
> Ther mighte been no faire creature.
> And ofte tyme this was hir manere,
> To gon y-tressed with hir heres clere
> Doun by hir coler at hir bak bihinde,
> Which with a threde of gold she wolde binde.
>
> And, save hir browes joyneden y-fere,
> Ther nas no lak, in ought I can espyen; etc. 1.

Yet long before this our picture of the heroine has been completed, and these words definitely set forth seem almost an after-thought, interesting but unimportant. The direct description of Troilus is also an after-thought. Diomedè's description, which occurs on the same page is, as well as that of Troilus, distinctly conventional, with the exception of one line:

> And som men seyn, he was of tunge large. 2.

It is not by direct comment that we appreciate the difference between him and the unfortunate Troilus.

In the Prologue of the Canterbury Tales each character is carefully delineated, with comment on appearance, habits, and traits. In every case the details are cleverly selected to give a clear picture in the small space available for each.

The conventional characters are marked less by appearance than by characteristic habits and occupations. The Knight, for instance, "hadde the bord bigonne", and had fought in all the accepted nations. All we know of his array is that it is correct

1. T. & C. Bk.V. lines 806-814
2. " " " " 804

and that it is splattered with mud, showing his correct haste to join the pilgrimage. The squire, his son, has curling locks, wears fresh flowers, and can sing, dance and compose verses, but of him as an individual we know nothing.

On the other hand, the details of other characters are selected with this individuality in mind. Note the Prioress, for instance, characterized by her mild oath, her meticulous table manners and her dainty features. Mark the gold love-knot which is worn by the Monk. What could be more unique than the speech of the Friar, who

> Somewhat...lypsed, for his wantowness
> To make his English swete upon his tonge, 1.

than the grudging speech of the Clerk, or the dreadful face of the Miller? The slight glimpses into the lives and habits of these people are also revealing, but Chaucer never tells us too much to deaden our interest.

Likewise, each of the pilgrims, in his own tale, presents his own characters by direct comment. Some of these are types, as Virginia and Emily; but others are extremely individual. With startling vividness the Miller introduces the carpenter's young wife. This description is so excellent that I must reproduce it in full.

> Fair was this yonge wyf, and ther-with-al
> As any wesele hir body gent and smal.
> A ceynt she werede barred al of silk,
> A barmclooth eek as whyt as morne milk
> Upon hir lendes, ful of many a gore.
> Whyt was hir smok and brouded al bifore
> And eek bihinde, on hir coler aboute,
> Of col-blak silk, with-inne and eek withoute.
> The tapes of hir whyte voluper

1. A. lines 264-265

Were of the same suyte of hir coler;
Hir filet brood of silk, and set ful hye:
And sikerly she hadde a likerous ye.
Ful smale y-pulled were hir browes two,
And tho were bent, and blake as any sloo.
She was ful more blisful on to see
Than is the newe pere-jonette tree;
And softer than the wolle is of the wether.
And by hir girdel heeng a purs of lether
Tasseld with silk, and perled with latoun.
In al this world, to deken up and doun,
There nis no man so wys, that coude thenche
So gay a popelote, or swich a wenche.
Ful brighter was the shyning of hir hewe
Than in the tour the noble y-forged newe.
But of hir song, it was as loude and yerne
As any swalwe sitting on a berne.
Ther-to she coude skippe and make game,
As any kide or calf folwinge his dame.
Hir mouth was swete as bragot or the meeth,
Or hord of apples leyd in hey or heeth.
Winsinge she was, as is a joly colt,
Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.
A brooch she baar up-on hir lowe coler,
As brood as is the bos of a bocler.
Hir shoes were laced on hir legges hye;
She was a prymerole, a pigges-nye 1.

How far this description lies from the old conventional type is apparent. Rhetorically it is not as perfect; there is no logical order, and certain details,of clothes for example, keep recurring at inappropriate points. Yet this incoherent order adds the piquancy that the old forms lacked. Here too we have the suitableness of common words and of homely similes, suited both to the Miller's rude speech and to the informality of his subject. There is a frank appeal to the senses that adds vividness, On the whole it is a portrait of which any modern psychological writer might be proud.

b. Closely akin to direct comment is Chaucer's second way of revealing character through the words of another character. So Pandarus praises Criseyde to Troilus, and later praises Troilus to Criseyde, and once Criseyde engagingly praises herself in an

1. A. lines 3233-3267

introspective passage. In this way we learn of Blanche in the Book of the Duchess, And so we receive our knowledge of the additions to the party of pilgrims, the Chanoun and his Yeoman, as the host questions the servant:

> His oversloppe nis nat worth a myte,
> As in effect, to him, so mote I go!
> It is al baudy and to-tore also.
> Why is thy lord so sluttish, I thee preye...? 1.

and

> Why artow so discoloured of thy face? 2.

In this way we receive also a distinct impression of the Host's wife through his vehement recital of her abuse.

c. A third method of revealing personality is by the conversation of the characters themselves. Both Criseyde and the Wife of Bath reveal themselves in every word they speak. Without any additional aid, the nature of Pandarus, his worldly wisdom, his sly humor, and his sympathy, are fully discovered to us in his own discourse. The Host too is delineated wholly by dialogue. An excellent illustration from the tales is the Madame Pertelote of the Nun Priest's Tale , whose conversation bristles with competence and unimaginative commonsense. In a few casual utterances Chaucer differentiates the two friends of January, Placebo and Justinius,in the Merchant's Tale. An amusing illustration of how a character may betray himself by what he does not say is shown in the reaction of the Monk to the coarse jesting of the Host, for he deliberately ignores the insinuations of the speech and announces with dignity that he will recount some tragedies, a snub much more effective than an angry retort would have been.

1. G. 632-636
2. G. 663

d. In like manner Chaucer reveals character by action. The instant obedience to the Host's demands point him out as a man of authority. The lines which describe Emily as she first ravishes the vision of the languishing Palamon are significant.

> This maked Emelye have remembraunce
> To doon honour to May, and for to ryse.
> Y-clothed was she fresh, for to devyse;
> Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse,
> Bihinde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.
> And in the gardin, at the sonne up-riste,
> She walketh up and doun, and as hir liste,
> She gadereth floures, party whyte and rede,
> To make a sotil gerland for hir hede,
> And as an aungel hevenly she song. 1.

Not only is this picture refreshing and lovely, but it creates an atmosphere of beauty around Emily which makes an actual description of her unnecessary.

How instantly we respond to the complacence of the Friar as

> Fro the bench he droof awey the cat,
> And leyde adoun his potente and his hat,
> And eek his scrippe, and sette him softe adoun. 2.

And how we rejoice at the cook, so exuberantly free from inhibitions, who

> .....whyl the Reve spak,
> For joye, him thoughte, he clawed him on the bak. 3

e. A more indirect method of character portrayal used skillfully by Chaucer is the revelation of one character by his effect upon others. We are given a description of Criseyde, but we receive our real impression of her beauty and gentleness through her effect upon Troilus and upon Diomede. In the same manner our distrust of the Somnour increases when we learn that

> Of his visage children were afered 4.

Chaucer's complimentary description of the Prioress seems more

1. A. lines 1046-1055
2. d. " " 1775-1777
3. A. " " 4324-4326
4. A. " " 630

authentic when the Host abandons his rough tone of command and speaks to her "as curteisly as it had been a mayde." 1. During a dispute between the Somnour and the Friar the Host exclaims,"Pees, namore of this," and at the instant peace that results we see him to be a man of authority. Likewise the Knight asserts his authority on two occasions, and, securing enforced harmony in difficult situations, proves himself a leader and, in so doing, lends a touch of distinction to his own conventionality.

f. A still more indirect method by which Chaucer reveals character is through the description of a person's surroundings. The best illustration of this method is in the Miller 's Tale , when the character of Nicholas is cleverly indicated by the objects in his room. 2.

3. A review of these examples of skillful description and characterization leads to a few general observations. We are sure now that Chaucer knew the accepted paths, but that he blazed his own trail and in some cases reached a point which has never been passed. A few of the general characteristics of his work might be noted. a. The first is the accurateness with which he expressed himself. The breadth of vision and interest displayed in these word-pictures reveals a remarkably close observation of life and a skill at selecting the few details necessary for an exact and vivid picture. The impression is not blurred by many items, but stands out sharply. At the same time his words, by their connotation and combination, suggest pos-

1. A. line 1636
2. A. " 3199-3211

sibilities unmentioned, and enrich the idea with an appeal to the imagination of his readers. For sheer effectiveness could the following description be surpassed?

> Have ye nat seyn som tyme a pale face,
> Among a prees,of him that hath be lad
> Toward his deeth, wheras him gat no grace,
> And swich a colour in his face hath had,
> Men might knowe his face, that was bistad,
> Amonges all the faces in that route:
> So stant Custance, and loketh hir aboute. 1.

The elusive power with which Chaucer created the atmosphere of his scenes is inimitable. But the key to this power lies in the selection of detail, and in pregnant words sparingly employed.

A second characteristic is Chaucer's constant use of images. This too reflects his close observation, for while an abundance of imagery existed in the models of the day, the imagery of Chaucer is quite a different thing. Notice the novel phrasing of a hackneyed simile:

> Right as the fresshe, rede rose newe
> Ayen the somer-sonne coloured is,
> Right so for shame al wexen gane the hewe
> Of this formel, whan she herde al this; 2.

and the restatement of an ancient thought:

> Right as a mirour nothing may enpresse,
> But, lightly as it cometh, so mot it pace,
> So fareth your love, your werkes bereth witnesse. 3.

Nothing short of hyperbole could do justice to the eagle who transports Chaucer to the House of Fame, and he says of it:

> Hit was of golde, and shoon so brighte,
> That never saw men such a sighte,
> But-if the heven hadde y-wonne
> Al newe of golde another sonne;
> So shoon the egles fethres brighte. 4.

1;B. lines 645-651
2. P.of F. lines 442-444
3. Against Women Unconstant,lines 8-10

Aldous Huxley, in his essay on Chaucer, points out the poet's reliance on animals for his similes, and quotes the following examples:

> And if the cattes skin be sleek and gay
> She will not dwell in house half a day,
> But forth she will, ere any day be daunt,
> To show her skin and gon a cater wraunt. 1.

> Swiche glaryinge eyen hadde he as an hare(Pardoner) 2.

And I will add this example:

> His berd as any sowe or fox was reed (Miller)
> And ther-to brood as thogh it were a spade
> Upon the cap right of his nose he hadde
> A werte, and theron stood a tuft of heres
> Reed as the bristles of a sowes eres; 3.

Huxley goes on to say:"It is characteristic of Chaucer's conception of the world, that the highest praise he can bestow on anything is to assert of it that it possesses in the highest degree the qualities of its own particular kind." We have already pointed out this trait in the case of Cressida, who is not "mannish", and in the case of the "horsely" horse.

A particularly striking metaphor occurs in the Reeve's prologue, for besides being an excellent bit of imagery, it is expressed in the unadorned language of the humble speaker.

> For sikerly, whan I was bore, anon
> Deeth drogh the tappe of lyf, and leet it gon;
> And ever sith hath so the tappe y-ronne,
> Til that almost al empty is the tonne.
> The streem of lyf now droppeth on the chimbe; 4.

c. One fault of Chaucer's description, besides his tendency to adhere to convention when not extremely interested in his subject, is his occasional failure to maintain versimilitude.

1. T.&.C. lines
2. A. lines 684
3. A. " 552-556
4. A. " 3891-3895

The most common errors of this sort are the anachronisms which have been so relentlessly pointed out by critics. Chaucer relates the scene of a parliament in Troy, and causes Criseyde to read a book unwritten till centuries after her death. The most serious error is of course the Knight's Tale, which tells the story of Thebes in a chivalric setting of English gardens and battle fields. That Chaucer was perhaps conscious of his error is shown in two parenthetical lines included in the description of the temple of Mars. Chaucer cannot resist including such admirable examples of terror as Caesar and Nero afford, but he adds an apology:

> Al be that thilke tyme they were unborn,
> Yet was hir deeth depeynted ther biforn. 1.

We forget that our vast store of information regarding the costume and customs of ancient times was not at Chaucer's disposal, and even so would not have been appreciated by his fourteeth century public. Moreover, we feel that mistakes of this sort did not seriously concern Chaucer, who seldom made a mistake where the ways of men were concerned. Like Shakespeare, whose heroes, Romans, Moors, or Venetians, are all Elizabethan gentlemen, Chaucer showed a supreme indifference to superficialities of dress or custom except as they revealed character, and in the light of this indifference our criticism seems trivial.

d. The final characteristic of Chaucer's description, and the one which makes for his power and enduring popularity is his singleness of interest and purpose. His wide observation and varied forms of expression are all subordinate to the revelation

1. A. 2033-2034

of human emotion. For this reason, in his best work, he never introduces description for its own sake, but only where it is necessary for the complete development of his aim--which is to reveal character. In this sense Chaucer is realistic, not through any petty realism of fashion or custom, but through his portrayal, as clearly and exactly as possible, of the emotions of men and women.

III d. Narration

Having prepared ourselves by a study of unity, coherence, and emphasis as they are manifested in Chaucer's work, and of the three forms of discourse, Exposition, Argumentation, and Description, we turn at last to a consideration of the form to which all the others are only subordinates. To one telling a story Narration is naturally the chief problem, and Chaucer, whatever his powers as teacher, preacher, or poet, was primarily a story-teller.

1. Medieval and modern requirements

The medieval school of rhetoric would offer little help to a modern student of story writing. For one thing, as we have pointed out before, the question was not one of originality, but of the retelling of an old story, and the originality consisted in adding beauty. Beauty and simplicity were far from being the synonymous terms that we moderns, following the ancient Greeks, consider them to be; but beauty was attained by elaborate artifice. Hence we are prepared to readjust our viewpoint as we turn to a discussion of medieval authorities.

a. Professor Manly, in his analysis of the two authorities on medieval rhetoric, Gaufred, and Mattieu de Vendome, makes three main divisions of their work. The first division discusses Arrangement and Organization, the second Amplification and Abbreviation, and the third Style, and its Ornaments.

Under the first division, Arrangement and Organization, the main consideration is of methods of beginning and ending. Of beginnings we have two types, natural and artificial. Natural beginnings, being crude, are neglected. As artificial beginnings are classed those which plunge "in medias res", those which disclose the final situation before the antecedent, and those containing sententia, exempla, or occupatio. For ending, the preferred method is the employment of a proverb, a statement of a general idea, an exemplum, or a brief summary. Special attention is then given to the transition from the beginning to the body of the narrative, a figure called prosecutio. Concerning this transition Gaufred says: "In ipso continuatione, primum est continuare"--the prime requisite is to get on with the subject.1.

To the second division, Amplification and Abbreviation, the greatest space is given, since it is through amplification that an old story is beautified. There are six methods of Amplification, as follows. First is description, with elaborate patterns for the enumerating of details and characteristics. The second is digression, sometimes to another part of the subject, as in anticipation, sometimes to another subject. The forms of digression are sententia, exempla, nd abundant imagery. The third method is apostrophe, an address to a person living or

1. Manly: Chaucer and the Rhetoricians, page 9

dead, to inanimate objects or to a personified abstraction. The forms of apostrophe are: conduplicatio, subiecto, exclamatio, (a passionate outburst) and dubitatio(feigned hesitation as to what to say). The fourth method is a form of personification, prosopopeia or effictio, a device which represents as speaking persons dead or absent, animals, inanimate objects, or abstractions. The fifth is periphrasis or circumlocutio, the restatement or elaborating of an idea. This is very like the sixth, expolito, the representation of an idea in different words, or the elaboration of an idea by adding reasons, authorities, contrary ideas, generalizations, or examples.

Naturally enough abbreviation receives scant treatment. The main methods of abbreviation, if desired, are two: the author may speed over the parts of the story emphasized by former writers and dwell on neglected parts, or he may reduce the number of figures.

Of the third division, Style and its Ornaments, Professor Manly has comparatively little to say. He states that there are thirty-five colours or figures of words, twenty figures of thought, and ten varieties of tropes. He also divides the figures into two classes, first the familiar and more spontaneous forms of metaphor, simile, exclamation, etc, and second the more artificial patterns of alliteration, internal rhyme, etc.

This brief outline of the rhetorical methods of the day may serve to explain much of the writing in Chaucer's work which cannot be understood from our viewpoint, and the discussion of Chaucer's practices later on will refer constantly to this outline.

a. Subject matter

a. Before entering on this discussion of method some mention of the matter of Chaucer's poetry should be made. This question has been so thoroughly treated by every editor and critic of the poet that only a brief summary of their discoveries will be included here. Scholars are generally agreed that a study of Chaucer's writing causes it to fall into three divisions which have been named according to the predominant quality of each.

The first, or French period, from 1360-1369 includes the translation of the Romance of the Rose, the balades, roundels, and virelayes to which he refers in the Legend of Good Women but which have perished, the A.B.C., and the Book of the Duchess. The work of this period follows closely the French models and verse forms with their conventional patterns. The French attitude of mind prevalent in these authors is reflected also in Chaucer's poetry, especially the satirical attitude of Jeun de Meun, which touched so responsive a chord in Chaucer's mind that he never abandoned it but assimilated and made it his own. In speaking of these French models Professor Root says, they were " a literary dream world of lovely shadows, and graceful conventions." 1.

The second period is known as the Italian period, because during his travels and study, Chaucer discovered the Italian writers, Dante, Petrach, and Boccacio. Here he found a new set of models, more artistic and more inclusive than the French, and he received as well an intellectual inspiration which led him to penetrate into the mysteries of philosophy and human character.

1. Root: Poetry of Chaucer, page 16

During this period Chaucer translated the "De Consolatione" of Boethius, which left certain definite traces in his work, namely his recurring emphasis on the stoical acceptance of Fate, his curiosity concerning the problems of foreknowledge and free will, and his catholic belief in the true nobility that rises from greatness of mind and deed. But the part of his inheritance from Boetheus that concerns us most in our present study is his tendency to moralize or to insert significant paragraphs from that master as digressions into his own work. From Boccaccio Chaucer received two plots, and a deepened interest in men and women,as individuals, as well as a higher standard of artistry. From Ovid, who was his favorite model, he acquired much material later embodied in his own work, and also, to quote Lounsbury, "must have learned ..some of Ovid's ease and grace, his power of vivid description, his rich sensuousness of color and form."1. To this period belong Troilus and Criseyde,The Parlement of Foules, and the Hous of Fame, though Professor Root sees some indication in this last of a transitional state.

In the closing period, to which belong the Legend of Good Women, and the Canterbury Tales , there is no dominant influence, though much of both preceding periods still remains, absorbed and recreated. His own personality is now in the foreground, and every model is adapted to meet the needs of his own genius.

b. With the sources of Chaucer's plots we have no concern here. It is enough for us to note that of the many stories in circulation at the time, Chaucer selected a few and created new stories from them. Occasionally he took whole passages of

1. LounsburyL Studies in Chaucer, page

the original; generally he took only the bare outline, simplified it, added detail, shifted the emphasis,and infused the whole with his own vital personality. As an illustration of his procedure Lounsbury has analysed the long story of Troilus and Criseyde, which is based on the Filostrato of Boccaccio. One-third is taken directly,entire lines and stanzas being translated or paraphrased. The remaining two-thirds is Chaucer's own invention. Yet Lounsbury observes that Chaucer always seemed to regard this work as a translation.1.

c. Accepting the fact that Chaucer did not originate his plots, we have still to admire the tremendous breadth of achievement in tackling so various an assortment of tales. According to Professor Kittredge, "every work of Chaucer is referable to some definite literary category,which was recognized as such by his educated contemporaries."[2] The life of St. Cecelia represents the saints legend, the tale of the Prioress, the stories of the martyred child, The tale of the Man of Law is a romantic legend. The Legend of Good Women is an adaptation of the popular Legenda Aurea.The Book of the Duchesse is a form of love vision. The Squier's Tale is a pure romance of adventure. Sir Thopas is a parody. The Knight's Tale and Troilus and Criseyde are both examples of Italianate romance. The Franklin repeats a lay of Britain. The tale of the Wife of Bath is an episodical romance. The tales of Monk represent both ancient and contemporary tragedy. The tales of the Reeve and the Miller

1. Lounsbury: Studies in Chaucer, page
2. Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry, page 15 (for classification pages 15and 16)

are fabliaux, while that of the Friar might be classed as a satiric wonder story. The Somnour and the Canon Yeoman both tell anecdotes. Certain of these types are satirized, directly as in Sir Thopas, or indirectly as the tale of the Nun Priest satirizes the Monk's tales. Others suggest to us that Chaucer, at first admiring certain types, came to see their tediousness and grew bored and dissatisfied. Thus he gives less attention to each section of the Legend of Good Women, introduces unwonted humor, and finally abandons the plan in disgust. In the Monk's Tale he never completes all the fine rhetorical tragedies which once attracted him, and most critics accept the censure of the Knight and the Host of these moralizings as his own opinion. Thus we may trace a decided development in Chaucer's attitude toward the matter of his stories. As his interest in human nature grew, he realized the inadequacy of the old forms to portray his ideas completely, and he turned to the more flexible patterns offered by the legends and the fabliaux.

a. For Chaucer was not prejudiced in his study of human nature. He desired to include all types and all classes in his work, and the inclusion of his vulgar tales was necessary for the completion of his plan. The apology in the prologue of the Miller's Tale presents his attitude, an open-minded sincere appreciation of his task which is far different from the modern search for the morbid and the startling:

> And ther-fore every gentil wight I preye,
> For goddes love, demeth nat that I seye
> Of evel entente, but that I moot reherce
> Hir tales all, be they bettre or werse,
> Or elles falsen som of my matere. 1.

1. A. lines 3171-3175

Yet in the case of one type of story, prevalent now as then, Chaucer drew the line sharply. In recounting some of the tales of Ovid in the prologue of his tale, the Man of Law mentions some of the stories of monstrosities which the Latin writer included, and adds his opinion:

> Of swiche cursed stories I sey 'fy',
> Of swiche unkinde abhominaciouns
> Ne wol I noon reherce, if that I may. 1.

With the individualities and idiosyncracies of mankind Chaucer was concerned, and with all human weaknesses, but with abnormalities he had no patience.

3a. The Beginning

1.Our approach to the manner of story-telling is naturally through the logical order of beginning, middle,and end. Constant reference will be made to the outline of Gaufred's rhetoric given above, but for the sake of clearness and completeness a more familiar order, evolved by modern rhetoric will be followed.

The modern reader requires that the beginning of a story primarily arouse his interest, and secondarily put before him a situation which leads directly to an understanding of the characters and the nature of the plot. The medieval requirements we have already noted.

2a.In Chaucer's work, as we should by this time expect, there is a noticeable difference in the beginnings of his early and late works. His first works are marked by elaborate beginnings, according to the best tradition of rhetoric. The Book of the Duchess begins with personal narration and recounts the story

1. B. lines 80, 87-88

of Alcyone; we read a third of the poem before we reach the real subject, and there find an artificial beginning in the form of the dream technique. Likewise, in the Parlement of Foules we have an introduction of 119 lines, introduced by a sententia in the first line:

> The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
> Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquering, etc. 1.

and including a review of the Dream of Scipio, a bit of personal narrative, and an invocation. In the case of the House of Fame we discover that almost all the first book is devoted to an introduction composed of a concise exposition of dream psychology, an invocation to Morpheus, and a long digression on the story of Dido.

In Anelida and Arcite there is a brief invocation and explanation which classes the beginning as artificial, but the story itself has a natural beginning similar to that later employed in the Canterbury Tales. For a novel the length of Troilus and Crisyde the introduction of 56 lines seems comparatively short. The first lines announce the theme of the story, and there follows an elaborate invocation in the best rhetorical manner. In the Legend of Good Women we find elaborate beginnings modified, and examples of sententia and exemplum combined. Of the nine stories, three have natural beginnings and five are introduced by statements of theme. One opens with a sententia, and one contains a modified exemplum.

It is only as we approach the work of the latter part of

1. P. of F. lines 1-2

Chaucer's career that we find artifial beginnings giving way to natural. In the Canterbury Tales the elaborate style is still evident. The Prioress prefixes her tale with a long invocation, and the Second Nun opens with a conventional sermon, a statement and an invocation. The nature of each of these tales makes an artificial beginning almost inevitable. But the majorrity of the tales begin with truly modern simplicity. Where Chaucer sees fit to prefix a statement or an invocation he usually contrives to make of it a special prologue, or places it in the prologue to the tale, thus distinctly removing it from the tale itself. An illustration of this practice is seen in the Man of Law's Tale which is preceded by a prologue containing an elaborately developed sententia.

In the tales of the Miller, the Reeve, the Pardoner, and the Nun Priest, Chaucer reaches the most natural form of beginning, partly because rhetorical expression was not recommended for tales in the nature of fabliaux, and partly because in these tales Chaucer himself recognizes the advantage of a swift introduction into the situation.

The nearest approach to a precipitaion "in medias res" occurs in the tale of the Man of Law, which opens as the merchants arrive in the city and take up abode, where they presently hear about Custance, of whom we too know nothing as yet, Description and action then follow in chronological order. This is a doubtful exception to the rule that Chaucer's stories begin at the beginning, and give us all our necessary information before the action begins.

c. The transition from the beginning to the body is almost always clearly and correctly indicated. A good example of prosecutio occurs in Troilus and Criseyde,

For now wol I gon streight to my matere. 1.

2. The Middle

1. The first point in considering the course of the story is what Genung[2] terms the "continuity of movement". This problem is simplified for us because Chaucer employs only one order, the chronological. Without exception he begins at the beginning, relates his events as they happen, and concludes as he reaches the end. Likewise, his plots are uncomplicated, and one plot is sufficient for each tale. There are no sub-plots, and the counter-plots are of the simplest possible kind. The apparent naivete of such a plot is deceptive, for we cannot be sure that Chaucer could not handle a double plot when he chose, especially since he manages something very like one in the Miller's Tale. And we must remember that this meagerness of plot throws a tremendous responsibility on its development. In a modern version of Troilus and Criseyde, for example, we would surely have had a parallel plot of Pandarus' private affairs, and possibly an account of the love life of Diomede, and even of Deiphebus and Eleyne. Yet Chaucer succeeds in holding our interest through five books devoted exclusively to the affair of one pair of lovers.

2. Our next consideration is the rate of movement of the story, and here a striking difference in point of view manifests itself. For what the medieval rhetoricians recommended as amplification

1. T. and C. line 53 Bk. I
2. Genung: Working Principles of Rhetoric

we condemn as retardation. Therefore the six methods of amplification found in Gaufred's treatise become now the six means for slowing down the movement of the narrative.

a. 1. The first method of amplification is the use of description, and we recall the elaborate patterns that existed for just this purpose. Chaucer employs this device when he names all the trees in the forest in the Parlement of Foules. In the Knight's Tale the action is halted for 326 lines while the lists and contestants are minutely described. But later on in the same tale when another occasion for such an account arises, though the details are given, there is a haste, almost an impatience, about their assemblage that reveals Chaucer's eagerness to be on with his story. Later in the tales he deliberately overlooks such chances, as here, in the tale of the Man of Law:

> Me list nat of the chaf nor of the stree
> Maken so long a tale, as of the corn.
> What sholde I tellen of the royaltee
> At mariage, or which cours gooth biforn,
> Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?
> The fruit of every tale is for to seye;
> They ete, and drinke, and daunce, and singe, and pleye. 1.

Hereafter he lingers on description only until he has rounded out his idea to his own satisfaction, briefly, but adequately.

2. Of the second method, that of digression, examples are so numerous that it is difficult to settle on a few. Moreover, critics differ as to what is a digression and what is not, according to the connection each is able to see between the idea of the passage and of the story itself. The story of Alcyone in the Book of the Duchess, which certainly seems to us a digression, Kittredge excuses on the grounds that it concerns a bereaved

1. B. lines 701-707
2. Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry, page 57

wife, and thus sets the keynote for the tale.to come. In the same way he excuses a digression which seems unforgivable to most readers, the story of Aeneas and Dido in the House of Fame. Kittredge maintains that Chaucer deliberately employed this convention for an artistic purpose, since he emphasizes only the love and desertion of Dido. It still seems, however, that Chaucer could, and later did, create an atmosphere in shorter space, and that such digressions must be charged to his over-meticulous use of sources. Another digression which can only be called a mistake, occurs in the Manciple's Tale, and still another long one in the Parson's.

In his shorter digressions Chaucer is more fortunate.In Troilus and Criseyde Pandarus often sermonizes to a greater length than the situation would seem to indicate. On one occasion he includes an exemplum in his discourse; in fact a series of exempla:

> For thilke ground, that bereth the wedes wikke,
> Bereth eek thise holsom herbes, as ful ofte
> Next the foule netle, rough and thikke,
> The rose waxeth swote and smothe and softe;
> And next the valey is the hil a-lofte;
> And next the derke night the glade morwe;
> And also joye is next the fyn of sorwe. 1.

In the Prioress's Tale a brief sententia is noticed:

> Modre wol out, certain, it wol nat faille. 2.

It must not be forgotten however that literature was then judged wholly by its value for edification and not by its literary art, and that the presence of exempla and sententia which seem to us obvious and inartistic had a definite purpose in its own day.

1. T. & C. Bk I. lines 946-952
2. B. line 1766

3. Chaucer's writing is rich in the ~~fourth~~ third method of amplification, apostrophe. This is natural in the case of the Canterbury Tales, for the pilgrims are relating their tales to an actual and sympathetic audience, and exclamations and questions are quite in order. But Troilus and Criseyde also abounds in them, especially in the guise of formal complaintes, in which Troilus is remarkably skilled.

Exclamatio is so common that two examples will suffice here. The Legend of Cleopatra closes with the words:

> Now er I finde a man, thus trewe and stable,
> And wol for love his deeth so freely take,
> I pray god let our hedes never ake! 1.

and the Canon Yeoman fiercely interjects this comment:

> This fals chanoun, the foule feend him fecche! 2.

Of dubitatio, also a favorite device with Chaucer, one of the best examples occurs in the tale of Man of Law, when he asks:

> Who can the pitous joye tellen al
> Bitwix hem three, sin they ben thus y-mette? 3.

A phrase constantly recurring in these tales is "What sould I seyn?"

Of interrogatio there are also countless examples, one of which occurs on the departure of Criseyde from Troy:

> What wonder is though that hir sore smerte,
> Whan she forgoth hir owene sweete herte? 4.

which might be compared to a similar figure in the tale of the Man of Lawe, who employs the figure so frequently that his tale moves by stages interrupted by rhetorical stanzas:

> Allas, what wonder is it though she wepte,
> That shal be sent to strange nacioun
> Fro freendes, that so tendrely hir kepte,
> And to be bounden under subieccioun
> Of oon, she knoweth not his condicioun.

1. L. of G.W. lines 702-705
2. G. lines 702-705
3. B. lines 114-115
4. T.&C. Bk.V. lines 62-63
5. B. 267-271

The figure invocatio was a popular one and is still employed by many of our modern writers. Sometimes the person addressed is the reader himself, as when the Franklin deliberately throws a challenge to his listeners at the end of his tale:

> Lordinges, this question wolde I aske now,
> Which was the moste free, as thinkieth yow? 1.

More commonly the character is addressed, as when Chaucer exclaims:

> O sely Philomene! wo is thyn herte;
> God wreke thee, and sende thee thy bone! 2.

or the Man of Law introduces one of his digressive stanzas with the words,

> Allas! Custance! thou hast no champioun 3.

Occasionally some inanimate object is addressed, as in the case:

> O firste moeving cruel firmament,
> With thy diurnal sweigh that crowdest ay
> And hurlest al from Est til Occident,
> That naturelly wolde holde another way,
> Thy crowding set the heven in swich array 4.

or even an abstract, as here:

> O sodeyn wo! that ever art successour
> To worldly blisse, spreynd with bitternesse; 5.

An excellent example of the formal complainte is found in the Knight's Tale, as Arcite bewails his lot. 6.

Manly has noted that in every tale there are from one to twelve examples of apostrophe. A few of these serve a justifiable purpose as giving emphasis to the narrative; many must be classed as purely digressive.

1. G. lines 1621-1622
2. L.of G.W. lines 2339-2340
3. B. line 331
4. B. lines 295-301
5. B.lines 421-422
6. A. lines 1251-1275

4. The fourth method of amplification, that by prosopeia or effictio, Chaucer employs many times, but in the Parlement of Foules it furnishes the principle scene entire, since the dialogue is carried on by the birds who are gathered togehher.

5. Of circumlocutio we have many illustrations, one of which is valuable not only for itself but for its disclosure of Chaucer's attitude toward elaborate decoration:

> For th'orisonte hath reft the sonne his light;
> This is as muche to seye as it was night. 1.

6. Of expolitio a good example occurs in the Parlement of Foules :

> But natheles, al-though that thou be dulle,
> Yit that thou canst not do, yit mayst thou see;
> For many a man that may not stonde a pulle,
> Yit lyketh him at the wrastling for to be, 2.

and the Tale of Melibeus furnishes overwhelming numbers of examples of this form.

8. Included in Manly's discussion of the question of amplification is a detailed analysis of the percentage of rhetorical devices in the Canterbury Tales . Without incorporating more of his material into this discussion it is interesting to note that in the rhetorical devices contained the Monk's Tale stands highest, with 100%, and the tales of the Miller, Friar and Sumnour lowest, displaying only about 1%. The fact that a greater percentage of rhetorical expression is discovered in the tales of the Nun Priest and the Wife of Bath than in those of the Doctor and Man of Law is surprising to the reader. Manly explains this seeming paradox by pointing out that in the latter the rhetoric stands apart, and is intruded by the narrator, while

1. F. lines 1016-1017
2. P .of F. lines 162-165

in the first two it is dramatically woven into the dialogue itself and is thus less obstructive.

Many remarks scattered among Chaucer's works, especially in his tales, show us that he was fully aware of the harmful effect of digression. Some of these have already been mentioned; another occurs in Troilus and Creseyde when he announces:

> But how this toun com to destruccioun
> Ne falleth nought to purpos me to telle;
> For it were here a long disgressioun
> Fro my matere, and yow to longe dwelle. 1.

Nevertheless, we cannot escape the fact that the great fault in Chaucer's writing and the one which has estranged modern readers, is his inability to resist the inclusion of some interesting bit of information or preaching. Passages from Boethius frequently lend a forced dignity to the occasion. Criseyde, even in her vows of love, remembers to include classical allusions. It was one of the conventions of the time from which Chaucer could not wholly escape, and it may be too much to expect that he should. It is only that a few passages of unadulterated writing tantalize us and make us wish that the same care might have been taken more often.

C. On the other hand, one of the leading evidences of Chaucer's skill is his power to accelerated the movement, and to achieve rapid, unobstructed narrative when he desires it. Of the methods of Abbreviation advised by Gaufred, Chaucer's favorites are: first, the use of absolute constructions, as illustrated by the beginning of the second book of Troilus and Criseyde:

> Out of these blake wawes for th sayle
> O wind, O wind, the weder ginneth clere; 2.

and second, occupatio, or the refusal to tell , as shown in the following lines:

1. T. & C. lines 141 B

And in what wyse, I wol but shortly trete;
And of this thing I touche but the grete. 1.

Another means by which he abbreviates is ~~by~~ the use of outline form. Especially good is his outline treatment of antecedent and expository events, as illustrated by the stories in the Legend of Good Women. It would be difficult to condense by a single word the summary of the situation as found in the Legend of Hypsipyle or in the Legend of Ariadne. The Monk's Tale is almost wholy composed of outline formation. Professor Kittredge calls the Knight's Tale, in its condensation of Boccaccio's Teseide a "truly marvelous performance", and directs our attention to the "artistic economy even in descriptive passages". 2.

On considering the plan of Troilus and Criseyde we are struck by the rapidity and the lack of emphasis of Criseyde's second love affair. The events move swiftly from her meeting with Diomede to her final yielding, and we have no details as to the various stages of her love for him., as were furnished us in the account of her wooing by Troilus. Chaucer realized that here detail would be an encumbrance, for we know Criseyde already and can imagine her reactions. We are only curious to know whether she feels any remorse, and here Chaucer fully satisfies us.

In passing let us note one bit of rapid narrative in terse outline form which occurs in the Book of the Duchess and which demonstrates that even under influence of convention, Chaucer's common sense slways warned him when to leave well enough alone:

1. L. of G.W. lines 1692-1693
2. Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry, page 19

With that hir eyen up she casteth,
And saw noght;'A!' quod she, 'for sorwe!'
And deyed within the thridde morwe. 1.

3. a. The third consideration which Genung includes under his treatment of the course of the story is what he terms the Preparative Elements in Literature. The only element under this heading which applies to Chaucer's work is the element of Climax, under which is included suspense and surprise.

Chaucer's methods of gaining suspense are much the same as our modern methods, though his necessity is not as great since the end is always foreseen. The most effective device is that of withholding important information in order that its final effect may be greater. An early experiment along this line is the climax of the Book of the Duchess, when the Knight four times interrupts his moaning to exclaim, "I have lost more than thou wenest," 2. till the revelation finally bursts forth, "She is dead." In the tale of the Wife of Bath the knight makes his pledge and receives in return the answer to the all-important question of what women most desire in the world. But that whispered message is not revealed to us until it is solemnly and publicly announced at the palace hall.

A delay in the form of description or other digression sometimes accomplishes the same purpose, provided that it does not bore or distract the reader but merely increases his impatience. Possibly for the founteenth century audience this aim was realized in the long passage of rhetoric introduced into the Nun Priest's Tale as Daun Russel starts for the wood

1. B. of D. lines 212-214
2. B. of D. " " 744, 1136, 1305

with Chanticleer on his back. A case more intelligible to us is the famous scene of the visit of the women to Criseyde, as she prepares to leave Troy and Troilus. The sympathetic irritation and strain which we ourselves feel on reading this scene is a proof of the cleverness which devised it.

A third method, most popular with later writers, is known as foreshadowing. An obvious example is the dream of Chanticleer. Foreshadowing statements Chaucer seldom employs, though the Man of Law anticipates when he says:

> That cruel Mars hath slayn this mariage. 1.

But in the more difficult device of foreshadowing by atmosphere Chaucer is a master. The best example is of course the Pardoner's Tale , where a certainty of doom invades even the revelry at the tavern.

When it comes to the handling of climax itself Chaucer admits no obstructions. Here his sense of proportion is unfailing. The hand of the master is evident as he approaches the climax of the Prioresses Tale; consider the unbearable realism of these lines:

> This povre widwe awaiteth al that night
> After hir litel child, but he cam noght;
> For which, as sone as it was dayes light,
> With face pale of drede and bisy thoght,
> She hath at scole and elles-wher him soght,
> Til finally she gan so fer espye
> That he last seyn was in the Jewerye. 2.

For perfect handling of climax the Pardoner's Tale is unsurpassed. The steady inexorable advance of the action rolls on like a wave, breaks, and recedes swiftly. In ten lines the

1. B. 301
2. B. lines 1776-1782

denouement is complete, and the brief falling action is composed of six lines.

4. Vehicles of the story are the fourth consideration of Genung, and the number of these are three: Character, Dialogue, and Description.

a. Concerning character we have already reached certain conclusions, namely that Chaucer never introduced description for its own sake, but always to further his story. But we note now that sometimes the entire story is twisted to be subordinate to the revelation of character, as in the tale of the physician or the Man of Law. Whichever the case, there is always the perfect coordination of character and plot which reveals an essential consistency in the conception of both.

b. Chaucer employed dialogue to reveal both character and situation. His conversation is never meaningless or boring (unless we remember that of Dame Prudence and Melibeus) but on the contrary usually contains the important leads of the story. For instance, the plot of the two thieves of the Pardoner's Tale , who remain behind, is concocted through conversation. The scene of Dorigene's confession to her husband in the Franklin's Tale clearly reveals character. In the Hous of Fame Chaucer even places description and exposition in his dialogue:

> 'See here the House of Fame, lo!
> Maistow not heren that I do?'
> 'What?' quod I. 'The grete soun,'
> Quod he, 'that rumbleth up and doun
> In Fames House, ful of tydinges,
> Bothe of fair speche and chydinges,
> And of fals and soth compouned.

Herkne wel; hit is not rouned.
Herestow not the grete swogh?'
'Yis, pardee,' quod I,'wel y-nogh.'
'And what soun is it lyk?' quod he.
'Peter! lyk beting of the see,'
Quod I, 'again the roches holowe,
Whan tempest doth the shippes swalowe;
And lat a man stonde, out of doute,
A myle thens, and here hit route;
Or elles lyk the last hu blinge
After the clappe of a thundringe,
When Joves hath the air y-bete;
But hit doth me for here swete.'
'Nay, dred not thee therof,' quod he,
'Hit is nothing wil byten thee;
Thou shalt non harm have, trewely.' 1.

Troilus and Criseyde is like a play in the sense that the conversation, plus the accompanying stage directions of gesture and action, carry forward the story almost entirely.

c. Description, likewise, is, in the best of Chaucer's work, subordinate to the plot. In the Canterbury Tales the description of the pilgrims colors the narrative of each and enriches the tales with special suggestiveness. For a combination of description with narrative, in which the story is partly told by a series of descriptions, we recall the pictures on the walls of the temple of glass, in the House of Fame, which depict the life of Aeneas and Dido.

d.1. Two special devices of Chaucer's work, so rare in modern literature as to be neglected by modern rhetoricians, but very important in the Middle Ages, are the Dream Technique and Personification. The use of the Dream Technique was a fashion derived from the French models, and employed with success in such contemporary works as the Piers Plowman of Langland. But Kittredge has distinguished Chaucer's use of this convention

1. H. of F. Bk.II lines 1023-1045

by noting[1] that while in most works the dreams are not real dreams, but only a device to introduce the reader to an Arcadia peopled by abstractions, in Chaucer's works the dreams are invested with a dreamlike quality which lends to them reality. Magical appearances and instant disappearances lend credence to the dream in the Book of the Duchess , and the narrator himself (not Chaucer) is as helpless, credulous, and childlike as an actual dreamer. Kittredge also notes that Chaucer, for the first time in either French or English literature employs the convention for the purpose of a personal elegy, for which he believes it is just as well-fitted as the pastoral convention employed by Milton in Lycidas.[2] In the Hous of Fame Chaucer turns the form to a new end, a "humorous survey of the whole world of mortal endeavor". Here Chaucer himself is the dreamer.

2. The device of personification is represented by the eagle in the Hous of Fame, who, according to Kittredge[3] is not an allegorical figure but merely a device for conveyance and information. The same device is used in the Nun Priest's Tale. Certain touches remind us that we are dealing with animals, yet these animals talk and have emotions like human beings.

5. The fifth and last consideration which Genung applies to the course of the story is the Synchronism of Events. In most of Chaucer's tales the action moves forward, and not many threads are carried, but in the Miller's Tale two plots serve each to produce the catastrophe for the other. In the [illegible] Tale we follow the separate fortunes of two characters for a time, and the transitions are clearly indicated, as here:

1. Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry, page 67
2. " " " " " " " " 54
3. " " " " " " " 87

And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
And speke I wol of Palamon a lyte. 1.

Also in Troilus and Criseyde the connecting links are well handled, often even with imagination, as here:

Now lat us stinte of Troilus a throwe,
That rydeth forth, and lat us tourne faste
Un-to Criseyde, that heng hir heed ful lowe, 2.

C. The End

The one principle which guides the ending of a modern story is that it must be kept in mind from the beginning, and be the logical and inevitable result of all that has preceded it. This problem is much simpler in Chaucer's case than it is in modern writing, since his ending is usually announced at the beginning, and the only duty remaining at the end is to clinch the whole by an arresting sententia or summary.

1. In his early tales Chaucer is criticized on the ground of incompleteness, since both the Book of the Duchess and the Parlement of Foules end so abruptly that their total effect appears to be marred. On examination, however, these endings seem not incomplete, but natural and well managed. Having worked up to his highest point in the Book of the Duchess , Chaucer hastens to end his dreamm for which he no longer has any use, and with the intrusion of reality (marked by the striking of the bell) his tale is ended. Likewise, having solved the problem in the Parlement of Foules, he sees no need of prolonging his story.

2. In his later work Chaucer favors an explicit application of his tales. The Reeve's Tale ends with a proverb:

1. A. lines 1449-1450
2. T.&C. lines 687-689 Bk.II

> And therfore this proverbe is seyd ful sooth,
> 'Him thar nat wene wel that yvel dooth;
> A gylour shal him-self bigyed be.' 1.

as do the tales of the Manciple, the Nun Priest, and the Pysician. The Canon Yeoman closes with a 92 line sermon on the love of gold.

Another ending which Chaucer practiced frequently is that in the form of a generalization, explanation , or summary. Troilus and Criseyde, many of the Legends of Good Women, and nine of the Canterbury Tales end in this way. For example, the Wife of Bath, after stating that her characters lived happy ever after, adds her own theory of women's rights in a sweeping generalization. Most of the fabliaux end with a brief summary of the closing situation. There are practically no exemplum endings, that of the Friar's tale being a doubtful exception.

Of natural endings in the modern sense we find only three perfect examples. The tales of the Merchant and Chaucer's tale of Melibeus are brought simply to a close at the logical end of the narrative. The Pardoner's Tale , discounting the sermon which follows, ends naturally, and unlike the other tales, with a startling dénouement.

A peculiar form of ending employed by Chaucer is that of referring to other authors for further information. At the end of Hypsipyle and Medea he adds the words:

> But who wol al this letter have in minde,
> Rede Ovide, and in him he shal hit finde. 2.

Two of the tales, that of the Man of Law and that of the Prioress, end with a prayer.

1. A. 4319-4321
2. H.& M. lines 1366-1367

d. 1. When we have studied Chaucer's narrative technique in regard to the Beginning, Middle, and End of his stories, the development of narrative power from his earlier to his later work becomes at last clearly evident. His early narratives are based on poetic conventions as found in the Romance of the Rose , namely allegory, more descriptive than narrative in nature, and employing the old figures of personification, itemizing, and complainte. The Book of the Duchess follows the old patterns closely, emphasizing description of the tapestry variety, dream vision , and eulogy. Baldwin[1] says of this poem: "The closing dialogue is really rapid, but the thin lucidity of narrative, the usual aggregation, the involution, above all the stalling for description show that he was not yet giving his mind to narrative composition."

2. Under the Italian influence Chaucer acquired an interest in narrative which led him to explore new models. The Parlement of Foules, while still in the medieval tradition of allegory and decorative description, is enlivened by a slight individuality of dialogue and a suggestion of interaction.

In Troilus and Criseyde, however, Chaucer reaches an entirely new stage of narrative development. Here the medieval conventions of love become merely a background, description is relegated to setting, dialogue is used to further both characterization and plot. To quote Baldwin again,[2] "Chaucer has found out how to tell the whole story of illicit love progressively by revealing in speech and action not merely type, not merely situation, which has rarely been so used to its full signifi-

1. Baldwin: Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic, page 283
2. " " " " " " " " " 288

cance, but character moving to its issue. In this larger movement, sustained and advanced by progressive characterization, Troilus and Criseyde is the great medieval love story.... Chaucer's Cressid is the first great character of English fiction. The characterization, delicate enough to keep her graciousness even in ruin, and to give the unashamed materialism of Pandarus engaging frankness and humor, is dynamic. It gives the story motive. Cressed is always dominant, not in having more space, but in bringing about before our eyes alike the heartbreak of Troilus and her own degradation. This is Chaucer's achievement of narrative progress. Cressid, we say to ourselves, would yield to Diomed. But though dominated by Cressid, the movement is of all three characters interacting, of characterization advancing by stages, Thus Chaucer's refocussing is neither modification of Boccaccio's story, nor such variation as had already been acheived; it is progressive motivation toward a significant issue."

The House of Fame, though allegorical in plan is indicative of careful and exact construction. The design is concealed by dialogue and setting and Book III is, according to Kittredge[1], a "model of schematic precision." Professor Manly also finds indications in this work that Chaucer, although still under the dominance of the old theories, had begun to form an idea of new methods.

3. It is in the Canterbury Tales that Chaucer's mastery of narrative style appears, not only in its most complete form but as a distinct theory. Certain remarks on the use of colours, Rhetorick, etc, already quoted have shown Chaucer to be a critic. It is in the relation of description to narrative that this

1. Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry, page 93

critical viewpoint shows itself most clearly. For somehow Chaucer came to realize that true artistry consists not in rhetorical description but in the simple and straightforward telling of a story in living terms. Baldwin suggests that Chaucer's criticism of Vinsauf, and the sarcasm with which the Clerk describes the classics, is not aimed vaguely at grandiloquence, but directly at the introduction of rhetoric into story telling, for the reason that the very attempt at this hinders the directness of the narrative purpose.[1]

The Canterbury Tales are told with straightforward directness and simplicity. Professor Kittredge[2] has observed that they differ from modern short stories because they contain a single thread of interest followed from beginning to end without interruption, while the latter aim rather at creating a single vivid impression, and so are not always chronological but are composed of a series of striking scenes. But in both the Pardoner's and the Knight's tales, which are nearest to the modern type, individual scenes remain in the memory as well as the story itself. In other forms, usually the more conventional, Chaucer succeeds in creating a single impression by a shift of interest from plot to character; for instance, the dominant impression of the tales of the Man of Law and the Physician is of noble character. From the Canterbury Tales, strongly medieval as they may be, the modern student can learn much of the art of skillful story telling.

In his book, A Manual of the Art of Fiction, Clayton Hamilton has submitted several well-known stories to analysis in accordance with his definition of the aim of a short story,

1. Baldwin: Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic, page 290
2. Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry? page 36

which is " to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis".[1] A similar analysis of Chaucer's most perfect short story, the Pardoner's Tale would be exceedingly interesting. Following Mr. Hamilton's model I will examine the structure upon which this story is founded, discarding of course the sermons at beginning and end, and considering only the narrative.

a. Analysis of the Pardoner's Tale

To begin with, three main characters are chosen. More than one character is necessary since the doom that overtakes them is to be the inevitable result of the evil plotting of each against the other. In accordance with the greatest economy of means, two rioters might be enough, but this would require us to follow the thoughts of each one, whereas if a third were included the plot could be developed more effectively by dialogue. Therefore, to secure utmost emphasis a third rioter is added .Two more characters are now added, a taverner, in order that the exposition may be accomplished by dialogue, and Death himself, disguised as an old man, who represents the necessary antagonist.

The story must of course be told in the third person from an omniscient point of view, since at the death of all three of the main characters no other person should be present. The story opens with the meeting of the leading characters in the suggestive setting of a tavern. The first sentence, more crowded than any sentence a modern author would attempt, creates an atmosphere of horror as well as providing the first indication of plot complication. The exposition, an account of the ravages of one called Death, is accomplished by dialogue, after which

1; Hamilton: Manual of the Art of Fiction, page 189

the action commences with the oath of the rioters to slay this "false traytour". After brief narration the encounter with the old man takes place, developed by a dialogue in which the atmosphere of dread is increased by the use of symbolism, and the rashness of the thieves is emphasized by their rude insistence. No words are wasted in the following out of the directions of the old man or in the discovery of the gold, but a new plan is unfolded by dialogue for the disposing of the treasure, and, on draving lots, the youngest thief sets forth to the town for food, while the others remain to guard the treasure till night, It is at this point that the two counter-plots arise, The two left behind plot to kill the third on his return, and, being stronger in numbers, logically decide to attack him by force. This plot is developed through dialogue. The third thief, meanwhile, is alone, and it is necessary for the first time for the author to enter the mind of a character and to tell his thoughts. He cannot use force against two others, but he has the advantage of carrying the food, so that poison is the natural solution to his problem. His conversation with the pothecarie accomplishes all that is necessary in the way of exposition and preparation.The situation is now complete. Developing by natural stages, the plot has reached a point where the dénouement is the inevitable result of all that has proceeded. The two plots are now brought together, each providing the catastrophe for the other. The action is swift and certain, matched by the rapid movement of the verse. The conclusion is brief and tersely stated, a two line summary effectively ending the tale.

This tale is like a play in its reliance almost wholly upon

dialogue for the unfolding of character and situation, and in its definite order of rising action, climax, and falling action. Altogether it is as perfect a specimen of compact, economical, and highly effective writing as we could find to set up a standard for ourselves.

One more quotation from Manly is significant:

Chaucer's greatness arose from his growing recognition that, for him at least, the right way to amplify a story was not to expand it by rhetorical devices, but to conceive it in terms of the life which he had observed so closely, to imagine how each of the characters thought and felt, and to report how, in this imaginative vision, they looked and acted." 1.

It is this "realism" in the widest sense that brings Chaucer so close to the twentieth century. For, like the realists of the present time, Chaucer revolted against the romantic tendency which presented life in a series of lovely but spiritless patterns, and turned to the actuality of an everyday world, in which real emotions held sway. But there remains an essential difference between the realism of Chaucer and that of most of our modern writers. For while Chaucer tried to reproduce faithfully life as he saw it, and while he saw it clearly, observing ugliness and triviality as well as beauty and nobility, he was endowed with a great gift of common sense, which held all he observed in its proper balance, so that in his work the ugliness never obscures the beauty, and the trivial never becomes all-important. His steady vision makes for an essential norm-

1. Manly: Chaudeer and the Rhetoricians, page 17

ality that causes us to forgive even the crude ribaldry of certain of the tales.

For, as we end our reading of Chaucer's poems we are not depressed by a recognition of pain, or discouraged by a sense of futility. If we are not uplifted, as we are with Shakespeare, by a realization of greatness and sublimity, we are at least warmed by a rush of fellow-feeling and expanded by a wider and closer acquaintance with life, which leads to tolerance and understanding.

IV

Style

Though the question of Chaucer's style is too vast a subject to be treated here, a few characteristics of that style must be mentioned in connection with the principles of rhetoric upon which he based his work.

a. The first is the conciseness which marks all his poetry. In accordance with the accepted custom of medieval writers, Chaucer could expand and delay, and elaborate, But when he cared he could achieve a compactness difficult to surpass. Notice the comprehensiveness of the last four words of the following lines taken from a very early work:

> Ther nas to hir no maner lettre y-sent
> That touched love, from any maner wight,
> That she ne shewed hit him, er hit was brent; 1.

Especially admirable as a lesson in conciseness is the speed with which he sets before us the situation at the beginning of the Prologue of the Canterbury Tales: In twelve brisk lines he

1. Anelida and Arcite, lines 113-115

has met the pilgrims at the tabard, made their acquaintance, and set off with them. Also, in the case of Criseyde's scond love, Chaucer does not repeat the vacillating emotions, the final surrender to which he devoted so much space earlier in the poem, but merely touches the high spots in four swiftly-moving stanzas, ending with the line full of suggestion:

Men seyn, I not, that she yaf him hir herte. 1.

The Pardoner's Tale is throughout a model of crisp, concise narrative, and here Chaucer shows reticence not only in the words he employs, but in the story itself. He does not tell us, for example, that the old man who encounters the rioters is Death, but more effectively suggests as much by the threatening mood which pervades the scene.

Likewise a simplicity of style and diction marks all Chaucer's works. In the main his sentences are short, loose, and simple in structure. It is this effect of ease and spontaneity that has caused so many critics to apply the adjective naïve to Chaucer's works. Yet an occasional carefully constructed sentence of a periodic nature such as that quoted on page 21 shows how successful he could be when he chose the more elaborate method. Chaucer realized, however, that a studied effect, resulting from balanced sentences, antithesis, or over-careful complexity marred the clarity of his poetry. Kittredge states: "His diction has an elegant simplicity which produces, in its consummate art the deceptive effect of artlessness. " 2.

Taking his cue from an ancient teacher Chaucer himself

1. T. & C. Bk,V. line. 1050
2. Kittredge: Chaucer and His Poetry ,page 12

set the rule:

> The wyse Plato seith, as ye may rede,
> The word mot nede accorde with the dede.
> If men shal telle proprely a thing,
> The word mot cosin be to the werking. 1.

In general Chaucer follows his own rule. The simple "dedes" are recounted with no artifice whatsoever, while it is only in the more formal tales that Chaucer seems to have felt compelled to lend a touch of pompousness.

C. The imagery of Chaucer is one of the most striking features of his style. Scorning figurative language for its own sake, he saw its value in the clear and forceful expression of idea. To quote Manly, "Imagery, as Chaucer uses it, is a form of diction. His images are not used for mere decorative purposes, but because they are needed to convey to the reader the idea that lay in Chaucer's mind in the exact form in which he conceived and felt it."[2.]

Personification, as we have noted, was not only a medieval figure but a device for narrative as well, a device particularly suited to preaching, when allegory was employed to enliven a sermon. In these cases the allegory is thinly disguised and the human element is strong. Often the personification is only a bit of rhetoric, as when, in the A.B.C. Chaucer begins a stanza:

> Bountee so fix hath in thyn herte his tente, 3.

or when he adds the appealing description:

> For hit was, on to beholde,
> As thogh the erthe envye wolde
> To be gayer than the heven,
> To have mo floures, swiche seven
> As in the welken sterres be. 4.

1. H. lines 207-210
2. Manly: Some New Light on Chaucer, page 284
3. A.B.C. line9
4. B.of D. lines 405-409

Few good examples of metaphor can be found, and the number of similes, in proportion to the lines, is relatively small, though the quality is excellent. We have already noted Huxley's notation that Chaucer relied on animal traits for vivid similes. The similes in Chaucer's work are splendid testimony of his minute observation and memory. Note the Pardoner, for example, who says:

> Than peyne I me to strecche forth the nekke,
> And est and west upon the people I bekke,
> As doth a dowve sitting on a berne. 1.

The description of Alysoun quoted above (page 57) abounds in animal imagery.

It is interesting to note that many of Chaucer's best similes are those which express emotion. For example:

> And as in winter leves been biraft,
> Eche after other, til the tree be bare,
> So that ther nis but bark and braunche y-laft,
> Lyth Troilus, biraft of ech wel-fare,
> Y-bounden in the blake bark of care,
> Disposed wood out of his wit to breyde,
> So sore him sat the chaunginge of Criseyde. 2.

And the following lines which are admirable for the clear expression of idea in beautiful imagery:

> But right as whan the sonne shyneth brighte,
> In March, that chaungeth ofte tyme his face,
> And that a cloud is put with wind to flighte
> Which over-sprat the sonne as for a space,
> A cloudy thought gan thorough hir soule pace,
> That over-spradde hir brighte thoughtes alle,
> So that for fere almost she gan to falle. 3.

Chaucer came to realize that an abundance of ornament blurred the image, and it is interesting to note that he avoided the elaborate conceits, the strained metaphors and

1. C. lines 395-397
2. T.& C. Bk.V lines 225-231
3. " " " II " 764-770

puns of which Shakespeare was so fond.

3. The Tone of Chaucer's poetry should certainly be included in this brief discussion of style. Tone is closely connected with personality, and the attitude of the author is definitey reflected in the tone of his work. In the case of Chaucer it is difficult to approach the attitude of mind that lay behind his poetry, for like Shakespeare and Browning Chaucer himself remains in the background, and presents to us a confusing assortment of tastes and opinions in the words of his characters, so that we are uncertain as to which we may attribute to the man himself. With Chaucer's personal philosophy , intriguing as the subject may be, we are not concerned here. For it is obvious that Chaucer had no single great message to bring to the world . While Langland and Gower, his contemporaries, felt keenly their obligation to arouse a wayward people, Chaucer seems to have felt no concern for anything but pure story telling. Thus his work is not colored by any passionate zeal, or embittered by any hatred of vice, but is marked by a tolerant amusement which we may surely accept as characteristic of the man himself.

Of Chaucer's strong sense of humor we are certain, since it shines unmistakably through all his work. The tone of humor in his poetry has a wide range, from the broad ribaldry and crude comedy of the Miller and Reeve, through the witty repartee of the prologues to the subtle and sly remarks of Pandarus, and finally to the delicate satire of Sir Thopas. Yet throughout the entire range there is a kindliness and sanity to Chaucer's humor that keeps his touch always light. Nowhere do we find a

trace of the bitterness or contempt that is betrayed by such satirists as Defoe and Swift, or, in our own time, Shaw. Indeed, his humor is often touched with tenderness, even with sweetness, as in his treatment of Criseyde or the Prioress.

There are other qualities of tone also--pathos, so excellently demonstrated the Prioresses Tale, idealism, and serious philosophical meditation. Yet everywhere his light-heartedness asserts itself, sometimes almost ludicrously,as when, in the Knight's Tale , after a graphic description of Arcite's agony, he concludes flippantly :

> Fare wel physik', go ber the man to chirche. 1.

It is his sense of humor which prevents Chaucer from ever sounding the full notes of tragedy which Shakespeare could strike so well. Yet this same light-heartedness prevents him from surrendering to the pompousness and sentimentality that weakens such writers as Dickens, and warns him when the delicate line has been reached which separates pathos and sentimentality.

The question of Chaucer's style must necessarily remain incomplete.For one thing, it should include a discussion of diction and meter, two subjects which are too extensive for inclusion here. For another thing, style is too vague a thing to ever be captured satisfactorily. Root has included in his work one insignificant quotation from the Nun Priest's Tale:

> A povre widwe, somdel stape in age,
> Was whylom dwelling in a narwe cotage,
> Bisyde a grove, stonding in a dale.
> This widwe, of which I telle yow my tale. 2.

1.
1. A. line 2760
2. B. lines 4011-4014

of which he says," There is nothing remarkable in these lines, but they are the very essence of literature, and no one can resist their charm." [1]

Indeed, when we come to analyse the style of so intricate an author as Chaucer, to point out the clarity, the sane-mindedness, the buoyancy, the simplicity and variety with which he wrote, we are faced with a problem much too big for us, and are forced to conclude that rhetoric and technique we may understand and imitate, but that style has mysteries we may not hope to grasp. The advice of Pandarus to his friend, when Troilus sats down to write his first momentous love letter to Criseyde, contains perhaps a key to the treasury of style:

> Touching thy lettre, thou art wys y-nough,
> I woot thow nilt it digneliche endyte;
> As make it with thise argumentes tough;
> Ne scrivenish or craftily thou it wryte;
> Beblotte it with thy teres eek a lyte;
> And if thou wryte a goodly word al softe,
> Though it be good, reherce it not to ofte.
> For though the beste harpour upon lyve
> Wolde on the beste souned joly harpe
> That ever was, with alle his fingres fyve,
> Touche ay o streng, or ay o werbul harpe,
> Were his nayles poynted never so sharpe,
> It shulde maken every wight bo dulle,
> To here his glee, and of his strokes fulle.
>
> Ne jompre eek no discordaunt thing y-fere,
> As thus, to usen termes of physyk;
> In loves termes, hold of thy matere
> The forme alwey, and do that it by lyk;
> For if a peyntour wolde peynte a pyk
> With asses feet, and hede it as an ape,
> It cordeth nought; so nere it but a jape. [2]

And we may accept this as Chaucer's own teaching, and value it as the word of one who "Taughte, but first he folwed it himselve."

1. Root: Poetry of Chaucer, page 42
2. T.&C. Bk.II lines 1023-1943

V. Conclusion

Now that we have finished a rather cursory survey of Chaucer's technique, let us try to arrive at the theory that lay behind his practice. We are sure by now that Chaucer did not stumble upon effective writing unawares. On the contrary he must have formed, during his busy career, some very definite convictions about the art of writing. He never states these convictions in so many words, but his work reflects them at every turn.

a. Chaucer's whole theory of writing as we have seen it illustrated in his poetry, might be summed up in one very simple sentence: In the telling of a story the expression is subordinate to the idea. Since we have seen something of the medieval tendencies toward elaboration, this statement does not sound so obvious to us as it seems on the surface.

Chaucer was not the first to discover this precept, nor was he the last. Every so often in the history of literature, this theory, which seems so self-evident, is forgotten, and has to be discovered all over again by some writer less short-sighted than his contemporaries. Take for example the Euphuistic school, the Neo-Classicists, and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, each of which, in totally different centuries, denied this principle, if not actually in theory, at least in practice. The credit for discovery belongs to any man who, under the influence of such a fashion, is keen enough to preserve his sense of values, and to reassert the importance of matter over manner.

The evolution of this theory in Chaucer's writing becomes

clearer when we reflect that he did not progress, as have most great writers, from the crude unconventionality of youth to the calmer conservatism of age, but rather moved from a rigid observance of conventions to a freedom and individuality of expression. As he became surer of the ideas he wanted to express, in other words as his perception of characer grew keener and more tangible, he gradually cast off more and more of the old forms in order that his new thoughts might move unhindered. He had finally no need for meaningless decoration, since he often found it necessary to condense his original material to fit the intended space. Moreover, he saw clearly that rhetoric is of value only in so far as it serves to present an idea clearly and em - phatically, and that when it is forced to do more it becomes worthless.

6. Having decided upon Chaucer's theory of rhetoric let us review briefly the methods by which he adapted the rules of rhetoric to the conveyance of idea. In the first place, he excluded the non-essential and devoted his attention to the important.(It must be admitted that there are many exceptions to this statement, but considereing his work as a whole the rule may be allowed to stand.) In the second place he conveyed his thoughts logically and concisely, following a definite order and clearly indicating the stages and divisions of his subject; In the third place he threw emphasis upon certain parts of his subject and let other parts sink into the background . In the fourth place he adapted his language and his style to the peculiar circumstances of his subject, thereby securing both versimilitude and variety. These four principles make up

the lesson we have to learn from Chaucer.

The fact that Chaucer wrote in verse instead of prose makes no real difference in his value a s a model. For, to repeat once more, Chaucer was primarily a story teller. There are few examples of pure lyric poetry in his work, and none of these would serve to give him a very high place among the lyric poets of our language. Chaucer employed verse because it was the accepted mode of his age, and he adapted rhyme and meter very excellently to suit his narrative purpose. In the 16th century Chaucer would undoubtedly have been a dramatist, for he knew very well how to reveal both character and situation through dialogue. In the 19th century he would have been a novelist, for he proved in Troilus and Criseyde his ability to unfold at a leisurely pace the psychological history of his characters. In our present day he might have become noted as a short story writer, for he possessed the power to create a single impression with swift sure strokes in a small space.

c. One more idea in this treatment of Chaucer as a model and teacher might be noted. Longinus, the Latin critic, in his discussion of the question of imitation adds an original thought. I will quote from a translation of his treatise On the Subline:

It will be good then for us to body forth mentally, when we are at work on something that needs sublimity of thought and expression, how Homer would have said it, how Plato, or Demosthenes, or in history Thucydides, would have given it exhaltation. For these great figures, presenting themselves to us on high as objects of emulation, will somehow raise our souls

to the imagined standard. It will be still better if, in addition we set a sketch before our minds of how Homer and Demosthenes would have been affected, as actual hearers or readers of what we have said. For it is trying ourselves really high to suppose such a tribunal, such a theatre, for our own work, and to stand a mock audit or our writings with such hearers for judges and assessors." 1.

It might be well to consider this suggestion of Longinus', and besides playing the " sedulous ape" to Chaucer's writings, to "set a sketch before our minds" of how Chaucer himself would be affected by what we have said. The thought of Chaucer as judge of our work is rather appalling; we could hardly find a more sophisticated critic. We can easily imagine the tolerant smile with which he would view our earnest moralizings, or on the other hand the indulgence with which he would read our passionate outbursts of iconoclasm. His keen eyes would pierce straight to the point of our narrative, and we would shamefacedly watch all our pretty phrases, our high-flown eloquence, and our insincerity fading into insignificance under his quiet amusement, till we feared that, like the Host, he might pass judgment and say:

Swich talking is not worth a boterflye.

End

1. Saintsbury: Loci Critici. page 46

Summary

Since every student of writing naturally turns to the work of those who have already mastered the art, the careful study of the technique of one successful author might be of great value. Chaucer is well suited for such a study, both because he is a really great artist and because he is modern in spirit. Furthermore Chaucer deliberately evolved his own theories in spite of the strong influence of the medieval conventions, which were certainly familiar to him. In this thesis I have attempted to explain, using the modern terms of rhetoric, just how these theories are manifest in Chaucer's work.

The chief sources of rhetoric in the Middle Ages were the Latin works of Cicero and Horace, from which medieval writers, chiefly Gaufred de Vinsauf, compiled their own textbooks. These treatises deal not with the conveying of an idea but with the enriching of it with beautiful expression.

Chaucer's work is first considered from the standpoint of the three general principles of modern rhetoric, Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis. Concerning the question of Unity, we find that Chaucer is precise in defining his subject and in adapting it to suit peculiar circumstances. In developing the subject he follows the plan of sub-division into examples and particulars and of association. Though he tends to digress occasionally,we find that in comparison to the writers of his day he shows a keen sense of proportion and an ability to exclude non-essentials and to hold himself rigidly to his plan.

As for Coherence, Chaucer's work follows a logical order of time, place, process, or cause and effect. He also takes into account arrangement for clearness and for interest by the use of climatic order. In the development of his subject his procedure is orderly, including conjunctive expressions, transitional statements, and simple, compact, sentences. The simplicity of his plots and the care with which they are presented, give his work a clarity and singleness of impression which make them of special appeal in our present day.

Emphasis in Chaucer is secured in four ways: by the arrangement of both sentences and ideas in the climatic order; by the interruption of his narrative with antithesis or apostrophe, by the repetition of an important idea, either by word or by statement, and by intensification either through the use of concrete detail, hyperbole, or explicit statement.

Leaving narration till last, as the most important of the forms of discourse, we first approach Exposition as found in Chaucer's work. The medieval and modern requirements for this form are alike in that they demand a clear and logical statement of fact. The Exposition of Chaucer's poetry may be divided into two classes: the incidental explanations occurring at many points in his narrative and the detailed explanation comprising entire sections. An analysis of a section of the House of Fame in which Chaucer puts the whole imaginative theory on a scientific basis, reveals the clarity and orderliness with which he constructs his explanations, following the principles of Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis. The Astrolabe proves Chaucer to be a master at clear,

well-arranged presentation of highly technical matter. It becomes apparent that the only theory of Exposition which guided Chaucer's writing was that in presenting facts the chief requisites are clearness and directness.

Passing to Argumentation, we discover that examples of this form found in Chaucer's work, may be divided into three classes: the incidental observations, the complete arguments, formal and informal, and the stories with a purpose, The first class is usually found in the form of sententia. Of the complete arguments an analysis of an informal type from the Tale of the Wife of Bath reveals again the guiding principles of Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis. The formal types, represented by the Tale of Melibeus and the Parson's Tale show an exhaustive treatment of minute detail that results in tediousness. The tales with a purpose include moral tales and tales dealing with the marriage problem. As to Chaucer's theory of Argumentation, we may hazard a guess that he was not greatly interested in convincing his readers by direct argument, but preferred the more indirect method of presenting his facts impartially and allowing his readers to draw their own conclusions.

Coming next to Description, we find a great mass of material in the rhetoric of Chaucer's day, including patterns and models for every known sort of description. In his earlier work Chaucer followed these patterns closely, but in his later work he abandoned them in favor of his own methods. In his nature descriptions Chaucer never achieved much originality, and seems always to have considered nature as a tapestry background of little

importance. The lengthy conventional description of his first poems gives way to more suggestive remarks in his later tales, and there is no real interplay of setting with character and plot. In his descriptions of places and things he is more original, though still careful to follow a logical order. Touches of realism appear in these descriptions, replacing the conventional items of the old models. It is in his delineation of character that Chaucer most fully reveals his genius. There are six ways of revealing character, namely by direct comment, by comment of other characters, by conversation, by action, and by effect on others, and Chaucer skillfully uses all six, having particular success with the revelation of character through conversation. Chaucer's early description of character, though conventional, shows a touch of the individuality which is so apparent in his later works. The characteristics of Chaucer's description are: the accurateness with which he portrays life, the imagery with which he enlivens his portraits, his occasional anachronisms, and finally the concentrated emphasis on the revelation of human emotion.

As we turn at last to the consideration of Chaucer's narrative technique, we pause briefly to note the rules set forth in Gaufred's textbook for the treatment of stories. Next we consider the <u>matter</u> of Chaucer's writings, making brief mention of the French, Italian, and Closing Periods in order to gain slight understanding of Chaucer's background of study, and noting that although he lays no claim to originality of plot, he shows great breadth of interest in the variety of types he includes.

In considering Chaucer's narrative methods, we follow the three main divisions of story, the Beginning, Middle, and End. We find that in Chaucer's early tales the beginnings are artificial, but that most of the later tales begin more naturally. Under the Middle, or Course of the Story, is included the following items: 1) the Continuity of Movement, which in Chaucer's case is always chronological; 2) the Rate of Movement, which Chaucer retards by description, digression, and by the various figures of apostrophe, prosopeia, circumlocutio, or expolitio, or which he accelerates by employing outline form to condense his material; 3) Climax and suspense, which Chaucer achieves by with-holding informatiom, by interrupting the narrative, or by foreshadowing; 4) the Vehicles of the Story, including a. characters, which may be subordinated to plot or may control plot, b. dialogue, which is used to reveal both character and situation, c. description, which is subordinated to plot, and d. two devices peculiar to Chaucer, the dream technique and the animal allegory; and 5) the Synchronization of Events, which is simplified in Chaucer's case by singleness of plot. As for endings we find that Chaucer prefers an explicit application of his stories in the form of sententia, generalization, summary, or proverb. The development of Chaucer's narrative methods may be traced through his work, from the early attempts to adapt conventional forms to his final success in revealing life as he saw it, directly and realistically.

The chief characteristics of Chaucer's style are the

conciseness with which he expresses his thoughts, the frugal but highly effective use of the figures of speech, and the tone of humor which pervades all his work.

A careful study of Chaucer's practice leads us to the conclusion that his fundamental theory of rhetoric may be expressed very simply, and amounts to this: that in telling a story the expression is subordinate to the idea.

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APPENDIX

Glossary of Medieval Rhetorical Terms
From Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic ---Baldwin

(a) figurae verborum

1. repetitio, initial repetition
2. conversio, end repetition
3. complexio, lwith 2
4. traductio, iteration
5. contentio, antithesis
6. exclamatio, exclamation
7. interrogatio, summary
challenge
8. ratiocinatio, questioning oneself
9. sententia, apothegm
10. contrarium, putting the opposite
11. membrum, clause in relation
12. articulus, staccato
13, continuatio, closing series
14. compar, balance
15. similiter cadens, rime on inflections
16. similiter desinens, rime
17. annominatio, word-play
18. subictio, suggestion of reply
19. gradatio, linking repetition
20. definitio, defintion
21. transition linking summary
22. correctio, substitution
23. occupario (occultatio, praeteritio), specifying under cover of passing over
24. disiunctio, syntactical separation
25. coniounctio, syntactical combination
26. adiunctio, salient key-word
27. conduplicatio, iteration
28. interpretatio, repetition in other words
29. commutatio, Chiasmus
30. permissio(concessio), yielding
31. dubitatio, feigned hesitation
32. expeditio, logical exclusion
33. dissolutio, asyndeton
34. praecisio (aposiopesis), unfinished sentence
35. conclusio, syllogistic summary
36. pronominatio , title or epithet for name
37. nominatio, onomatopoeia
38. denominatio, metonymy
39. circutio, periphrasis
40. transgressio, hyperbaton

41. superlatio, hyperbole
42. intellectio, synecdoche
43. abusio, catachresis
44. translatio, metaphor
45. permutatio, allegorical or ironical allusion

(b) figurae sententiarum

1. distributio, itemizing
2. licentia, boldness
3. diminutio, disparagement
4. descriptio, descriptive detail
5. divisio, dilemma
6. frequentatio, cumulation
7. expolitio, iteration
8. sermocinatio, direct discourse
9. commoratio, iteration
10. contentio, antithesis
11. similitudo, simile
12. exemplum, instance
13. imago, comparison
14. effictio, portrait
15. notatio, ethopoeia
16. conformatio, prosopopoeia
17. significatio, suggestion, insinuation
18. brevitas, rapid narration
19. demonstratio, ecphrasis

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